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ABSTRACT

The progress of a foundation-supported community intervention in Israel is traced from the moment of its conceptualization in 1976 to its final adoption in 1983 by the community in which it grew and developed. Part 1, "The Story of a Project," is divided into ten sections, of which the first three describe the project setting, its background and origins, and its beginnings. The fourth section describes project operations in the first phase, 1978-80: (1) neighborhood-based community education programs; (2) a community school project; (3) parent involvement in the kindergarten; (4) clinic play corners; (5) a home-intervention program; and (6) training local women as paraprofessional counsellors. The fifth section reports on re-appraisals of the project at the end of the first phase and the directions decided on for the second. Next, the operations in the second phase (1981-83) are described: (1) neighborhood family centers; (2) an early childhood resource center; (3) parent education and play corners in the clinics; (4) a home-intervention program; (5) a program for teenage girls; (6) a tutorial program; and (7) staff training. The remaining four sections in Part 1 deal with the phasing out of the foundation-supported structure and the assumption of responsibility by the community. The state of the project a year later is also reported on. Part 2 discusses intervention for social change as a dynamic process and Part 3 addresses the general problems of a community intervention in Israel and then analyzes the Ofakim intervention as a case in point. Appendices contain the abstract of a summative evaluation report on the project and a list of publications related to the project. (RDN)

Institute for Education and Community Development
Negev Regional College

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PROJECT EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

OFAKIM - ISRAEL

SUMMARY REPORT ON PROJECT OPERATIONS 1977 - 1983

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PROJECT EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

OFAKIM - ISRAEL

SUMMARY REPORT ON PROJECT OPERATIONS 1977 - 1983

Prepared by:
Ruth Paz
Project Director

January 198[illegible]

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PREFACE

This is the story of a community intervention - Project Education and Community Development in Ofakim, Israel - and of its progress between two points in time: from its conceptualization in the minds of its initiators in 1976 to its final adoption by the community in which it grew and developed at the end of 1983. I find myself thinking, as I write these lines, that it also is my story - for, throughout these years, the project was a central factor in my life, absorbing the better part of my time, capacities, skills and emotions. About people, and with people - a community project such as this develops a distinct character and personality of its own; guiding and shaping the growth of a project is much like raising a child, with all the joys and agonies that entails. The course of its development is not wholly predictable, nor its emerging needs and wants; its behaviour is at times irrational, and it evolves a distinct personality of its own. No less than the child, it cannot be pre-programmed and directed according to what "we think is best". Good project development, much like good child-rearing, is an interactive process, and the best outcomes are often those which were not planned. For me, the story of the project is the story of the child I raised, or rather, whom I helped to grow. However, unlike the parent, of whom we do not demand objectivity, it is my task not only to describe that which occured as objectively as possible, but also to define it in terms of objectives and outcomes, cause and effect. Thus, part I of this report, "The Story of a Project" is descriptive, a chronicle of the development of the project and its activities from its inception to its conclusion. Part II - 'Intervention for Social Change as a Dynamic Process' is a modest attempt to examine the process of intervention from a theoretical perspective. Part III, 'The Story of Intervention', applies the analytical categories defined in part II to the project. No attempt is made in the summary report to systematically evaluate the outcomes of the intervention or to assess the efficacy of various programs in terms other than those of informed intuition. These questions will be dealt with in depth in the Summative Evaluation Report which is being prepared by the Evaluation Unit of the H. Humphrey Centre for Social Ecology at the Ben-Gurion University of the Negev by Dr. Amir Ben Porat and Mrs. Miri Levin-Rosalis.

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An abstract of this report appears here as Appendix 1. No less, this report does not concern itself with the moshav satellite project, in the Merchavim region which began operations at the beginning of Phase II. Project Education and Community Development in the Moshav has been functioning as a separate entity since the beginning of 1984, and it seems appropriate to deal with its development separately.

I have attempted in this report to describe the development of the Ofakim Community Education Project in a manner which will bring it alive for the reader, while at the same time attempting to identify those elements of project development of significance to those dealing with similar problems in other settings. I hope that I have succeeded in both attempts at least in part.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The list of individuals and organizations whose support made this project possible and whose encouragement contributed to its success is lengthy. It is impossible to list them all (and probably inadvisable to do so, for inevitably someone will be forgotten) - however, I thank them all. Two organizations without whose continued support the project would have been impossible must be mentioned. First and foremost, the Bernard van Leer Foundation of the Netherlands, which not only provided the major share of financial assistance, but which through its unique method of operation, nurtured the growth of the project throughout. Providing maximal degrees of freedom for project development within the parameters of clearly defined objectives, the Foundation was at all times involved, but never interferring. Secondly, the Federation of Kibbutz Movements, which, guided by its concern for the future shape of Israeli society supported the basic tenets of the project, and contributed to its development by underwriting my own work and that of Sasona Barzilai, my co-worker, in Ofakim.

Above all, I thank my colleagues in the project, both those from outside Ofakim, and those who are residents of the town and continue to work in the project - for giving it the best of themselves.

Last, but not least, I thank the people of Ofakim who participated in the project in various capacities - for without them, that which was achieved could not have come to be.

Ruth Paz
January 1985

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PART I: THE STORY OF A PROJECT

A. THE PROJECT SETTING

Ofakim is a development town in the Northern Negev region of Israel, typical of the new towns established in under-developed areas of the country in the 50's to absorb the mass immigration of Jews who flocked to the new state of Israel from the Islamic world in which they had lived as a minority group for centuries. In 1977, Ofakim had some 12.000 inhabitants, 90% of whom were immigrants or children of immigrants from Morocco, Yemen, Tunisia, Iran, Iraq and India, who had come to Israel from the traditional, pre-industrialized societies of their countries of origin economically destitute, lacking technological skills, vocational training, education and familiarity with the language and culture of modern, industrialized Israel. The challenge which faced them was not only that of adaption and absorption into an existing, radically different society, but that of creating the infra-structure - economic, social and administrative - of a new community. The problems facing the town of Ofakim in the 70's originated in the difficulties of this pioneering period. Young people found little challenge in the unskilled and ill-paid employment available in the local industries (mainly textile) established in the 50's and 60's to provide work for the new settlers - with the result that many of the more talented and ambitious left the town, while trained and educated people were reluctant to settle there permanently. This process further exacerbated dependency on outsiders for the maintainance of the essential social, educational and welfaire services which the population was ill-equipped to provide for itself. Local government and statutory authorities were dependent on central government for funds, a process which had not fostered the development of local autonomy. Over 50% of the population was under the age of 18; these children, and the schools which they attend, were classified as 'disadvantaged' by the Ministry of Education. The attenuation of parental authority and traditional norms typical of immigrant populations further contributed to a sense of powerlessness and negative self-image leading to frustration on one hand, and apathy on the other. These factors, combined with the general cultural impoverishment of the home environment, proveded all the conditions for the perpetuation of a vicious circle of disadvantage difficult to break as long as the impetus for change did not come from within the community itself.

B. THE BACKGROUND AND ORIGINS

In July 1973, the Commission for Children and Youth in Distress which had been appointed by Prime Minister Golda Meir published its findings. The so-called Katz Report shocked the country by its revelation of the extent of educational and social disadvantage in Israel, especially in the development towns and depressed city neighbourhoods. Its impact on the national consciousness was exacerbated by the Yom Kippur War, in which, for the first time, the sons of new immigrants and of veteran settlers fought and suffered casualties side by side. In wake of the report, the Educational Welfare Project of the Ministry of Education was established, as were a variety of other initiatives, among them those of the kibbutz movement.

The Katz Report pointed out that distress, or disadvantage, was a multi-dimensional problem, the distressed individual (or community) suffering from a relative lack of resources in one or more of the following: income, availability of social services and the conditions for utilizing them, prospects for educational or social mobility, participation in decision-making in the political or administrative systems, and enjoyment of social prestige and resultant positive self-image. The report also stressed the primary importance of educating and helping the distressed population to reach a fuller awareness of its problems, developing leadership from its own ranks, and participating actively in the processes of alleviation and rehabilitation. In its recommendations, the report emphasized the need for a multi-dimensional, integrated approach to combating distress. Thus, educational problems cannot be isolated from social and economic ones, the child cannot be viewed as an entity separated from his family environment, his neighborhood, and his community, and the problems of the individual must be dealt with within the broader context of family, neighborhood, and community organization. In summary, the report called for a shift of emphasis from the individual to the community, and for the activation of the community in the processes of social change and improvement.

In response to the Katz Report, a group of kibbutz members from settlements in the vicinity of the development town Ofakim initiated a volunteer program which involved scores of kibbutzniks in educational activities with children and their parents in the town: neighborhood activity clubs in shelters, summer-camp programs in the kibbutzim, discussion groups, outings and workshops for parents, etc. Somewhat naive in conception and amateurish in practice, this effort had obvious shortcomings, not the least of which was its one-directional, even paternalistic nature, leading ultimatedly to yet another form of dependency on outsiders. It became obvious that without community self-help, without the development of indigenous community structures and resources and the emergence of grass-roots community leadership, no change could be affected. Against this background, a group composed of kibbutz members involved in education and community development, academics for the Department of Behavioral Sciences at the Ben Gurion University of the Negev and representatives of the recently established Regional College of the Negev began to meet towards the end of 1976 to discuss ways and means of effective community development focussing on education as an instrument of social change. These discussions culminated in the establishment of the Institute for Education and Community Development, based at the P. Sapir Regional College of the Negev, and the decision to join forces with the Ofakim Local Council in order to develop a comprehensive, integrated program of community-based educational activities. A project proposal was drawn up and submitted to the Bernard van Leer Foundation based on the following assumptions:

a. that education can serve as a focus for the promotion of community development;

b. that the fullest development of a child's potential can be achieved through the integration of all the aspect's of its world - family, school, peer-group and community - into a goal-directed whole;

c. that education can serve as major vehicle for the promotion of social change and community development.

The proposed project comprised the following components:

a. *the development of a program of parent education, serving to increase the parents' awareness and understanding of the child's needs, to provide the parents with the skills and knowledge necessary for more effective functioning in their role as parents and educators, and to enhance their positive self-image and self-reliance;*

b. *the development of a program of parent-teacher interaction, in order to increase the effective functioning of both parents and teachers and their awareness of the potential value of their active cooperation in the educational process;*

c. *the development of a training program providing for in-service training and guidance for teachers and community workers, and the training of paraprofessionals in the fields of education and community work, in order to decrease the community's dependence on outside forces and increase its capacity for effective response to its own needs and problems;*

d. *the development of a coordinated program of informal educational and recreational activities serving the needs of different age groups in the community, increasingly organized and run by members of the community;*

e. *the development of an integrated framework of community services and activities, and the organization of viable, autonomous community organizations serving the needs of the community and utilizing the skills and experience acquired by its members in cooperative endeavours in the field of education;*

f. *the formulation of a theory of community structure and development based on the concept that the community is an organic, integrated social unit.*

C. BEGINNINGS

In September 1977 the Board of Trustees of the Bernard van Leer Foundation approved the proposal submitted by the Institute for Education and Community Development for the establishment of a Community Education Project in Ofakim. At about the same time, the Federation of Kibbutz Movements gave its support to the project by "drafting" Ruth Paz from her kibbutz to act as project director.

After almost a year of planning and discussing the proposed project, it was now possible to begin laying the groundwork for actual project operations. The first few weeks were spent in familiarizing ourselves with the community, its institutions and its population, and in compiling a descriptive and evaluative profile of Ofakim based on the data accumulated through interviews with key members of the community and documentary sources. The picture that emerged reinforced what we already knew about Ofakim and its problems. Within the parameters of our concern and potential involvement, we identified the following structural and functional problems which served to hinder the development of a viable community life and hampered the effectiveness of programs initiated by various agencies in recent years:

1. dependency on outside elements for the definition of needs and priorities and for the development and implementation of educational and welfare programs, with no provision for the training and active involvement of local people;

2. lack of continuity resulting from the incessant turnover of outside "experts" and the lack of trained personnel;

3. lack of a comprehensive definition of problems, of clear priorities, and of a coordinated program, with the result that existent programs were sporadic, fragmented, limited in their scope and superficial in their impact;

4. lack of coordination of efforts and planning on the part of the various services and agencies in the community, who as a result were often in direct competition and conflict with each other.

The strategy adopted by the project was in effect a response to these lacunae, and called for the active participation of the community itself in the process of defining its needs, establishing its priorities, and developing its own resources. The project team envisaged its own role as essentially that of catalyst and facilitator, and as a reservoir of specialized skills which would be put at the disposal of the community in developing its own programs. The project hoped to avoid the imposition of pre-conceived and ready-made solutions, while assisting the community in developing, implementing and running its own programs and training local people for this purpose.

We strove to engage the interest and potential cooperation of leaders of the community in the project by explaining our aims and strategy, and on the whole struck a responsive chord. In November 1977, the Executive Committee of the Ofakim Local Council met with representatives of the Institute to discuss the development of a joint project in which the community would play an active role from the outset. The decision was taken to set up a joint planning committee, charged with the initial task of determining the scope and focus of project activities in Ofakim, on the basis of the needs of the community. The local members of the planning committee represented the professional and political elites of the town, and their active participation in the planning of the project assured its legitimization. On December 22, 1977, the planning committee established the basic guide-lines for the project, and defined the parameters of project activity for the first stage of project development. It was decided to concentrate initially on one of the older and more problematic neighbourhoods of Ofakim-the 'Eli Cohen' district, which contained a large concentration of multi-problem families; to make the schools serving the community the foci of community activity and involvement, encouraging parent participation in the life of the school and school involvement in the life of the community; to strive to answer the needs of problem families in the neighborhood through neighborhood-based mutual aid and out-reach programs, and to cooperate with the various agencies serving the neighborhood in order to develop a coordinated program. The committee then subdivided into two task groups which undertook respectively to prepare detailed proposals for neighborhood project activities and for the development of school-home-community links.

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Additional community representatives were recruited into these task groups - thus, the heads of the two primary schools (one secular, one religious) chosen for the initial pilot project because of their proximity to the neighborhood joined in the planning of the school based program while the representative of the social service agencies took part in preparing the proposal for neighborhood-based projects. In February 1978, the proposal prepared by the planning committee was approved by the Ofakim Local Council and by the Institute for Education and Community Development. A project steering committee was selected composed of the director of the Department of Education, the director of the Department of Social Welfare, the director of the Community Centre, the two primary school headmasters, and the project director, with the recommendation that representatives of the neighborhood community and of the parents in the schools be added to the committee once actual activities began. April 1, 1978, was designated as the official date for the launching of Project Education and Community Development. More over, the Ofakim Local Council agreed to allocate IL 300.000 for project activities in the fiscal year beginning in April 1978. The initial plan of operations proposed by the planning committee called for two programs:

1. the development of a community education program in the primary schools;
2. the establishment of a family community centre in the Eli Cohen neighborhood.

However, some of the local leaders thought that the project was not sufficiently concerned with the needs of the multi-problem families in the community. They felt that these families were the ones most in need of care and attention and, that the danger existed that we would not succeed in integrating them into the regular operations of the neighborhood family centre and the parents' activities in the schools. A suggestion was made to act together with the Ministry of Education's Educational Welfare Project and with the local welfare office to develop a special program aimed at this group. As a result, another program, called initially <u>The Program for the Advancement of Education and Family Welfare</u> (later to be called the EMRA program) was planned, presented to the steering committee of the Educational Welfare Project and eventually approved in April 1987. Project operation began almost immediately, setting in motion concentric circles of community involvement.

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Throughout this preliminary "tooling-up" phase, beginning with the drafting of the first project proposal submitted to the Foundation in February 1976, and culminating with the approval of the operational project plan a year later, the planning team set up by the Institute for Education and Community Development monitored and guided the development of the project.

The combined academic background and practical experience of the team members ranged over several disciplines - sociology, anthropology, organizational development, community work, and education. This interdisciplinary approach proved to be very fruitful, bringing a variety of perspectives to bear on the initial analysis of situation and definition of problems, determination of aims and objectives, and choice of strategies. No less valuable was the fact that the field-team (in the first stage consisting of the project director alone, later joined by additional staffers) was an integral part of the planning team. This assured the project of on-going, immediate, feed-back and permitted a flexible, relevant response to developments in the field. The planning tear continued to meet on a regular bi-weekly basis throughout the first year of project operations. Later on, with the expansion of field operations, this framework was superseded by a field-team and an evaluation team (which also attempted to develop a theoretical matrix) which functioned independently but met at regulat intervals to exchange information and feedback.

The local steering committee also continued to meet regularly throughout the spring and summer of 1978 - until the municipal elections in November 1978.

In a small town, especially one in which a high percentage of the population is dependent in one form or anotner on the political establishment for employment, patronage, intervention with government agencies, etc., the political elite, especially the incumbent holders of local office, cannot be ignored or circumvented. The choice for any institution or body seeking to establish itself in the community is either to achieve legitimation - or face opposition.

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Throughout this period a relationship based on mutual respect and trust developed and it seemed that the Local Council and the professionals who worked together with us were committed to the project. The mayor himself forged the link between the project and the Educational Welfare Project, and together with the project director approached the Ministry of Education for additional funding, and AMIGUR, the housing authority, to provide an appropriate place for a neighbourhood centre in the Eli Cohen neighbourhood. His reluctance to bring the agreement which had been reached with the Institute for Education and Community Development before the full Local Council for ratification he explained as wanting to avoid a confrontation with the opposition, which might torpedo the project. As he put it, "if there is ever a change in administration, if they want to abide by the agreement, a formal agreement will be superfluous; if not, they will find ways of breaking it". With the exception of one member of the NRP leadership, David Shachar, who as the 'eminence grise' of the opposition was invited to join the project planning committee, no discussions were held with that sector of the political elite which was out of power. In retrospect, this was almost our undoing.

PROJECT OPERATIONS - PHASE I:1978-1980

The first six months had been devoted to planning a multi-faceted community education program. The neighbourhood-community was chosen as the main base of operations for the launching of parent-education and parent involvement programs, as well as existing educational institutions (schools and kindergartens) and service facilities (health-service and 'well-baby' clinics). As the various initiatives took root and flourished, a concerted effort was made to coordinate their activities and link them into a network of community-education programs which, by mutually reinforcing each other and striving towards a common educational aim, would increase their ultimate impact and effectiveness and ensure maximal 'coverage'. The main thrust of project activities was in the direction of the prevention of deprivation, rather than compensation for its deleterous effects.

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This meant in effect reaching the child via the parent and assuring that the home - the child's first 'school' - provides better conditions for his overall development - emotional, social, and moral, no less than cognitive. Although the project initiated various programs working directly with children, it never relinquished this emphasis on the parent as active partner; thus parent involvement in kindergartens and schools became the logical continuation of an on-going process whose effect was envisioned as cumulative. The project believed the parent's and the community's involvement in the school to be vital in providing those dimensiosn of relevance and responsibility which assure that education is indeed education for life.

To ensure that the parent would continue to play an active role in the child's education beyond the pre-school years, it was necessary on one hand to convince the schools of the importance of working in close cooperations with parents - and on the other to provide parents with the opportunity to further their own education, to be able effectively to fulfill that role. Thus parent-teacher interaction and the 'school for parents' became integral components of the community-education philosophy and strategy.

To staff these programs, the project trained teams of local women as para-professional counsellors: in intensive 4-5 week courses, these women learnt the rudiments of early childhood development and education, interpersonal communication and community work as well as a variety of practical skills such as toy-making, observing recording and record-keeping, and soforth. This initial training was reinforced and expanded by an on-goin inservice training program. It was hoped that through this process a core of skilled local people would develop, committed to the project's aims and assuring continuity of programs.

1. <u>Neighbourhood-based Community Education Programs</u>

<u>The Eli Cohen Neighbourhood Centre</u>

Our initial contacts with the neighbourhood began in January 1973, after the planning committee decided to concentrate activities in the Eli Cohen neighbourhood and the schools connected with it.

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We found Eli Cohen to be a heterogeneous neighbourhood of some 250 families. About a third of these families had five or more children, but there was also a growing proportion of young couples who were moving into the apartments vacated by large families who had been re-housed in the new Ben Gurion district. Among the younger families therewere a fair number of white-collar and skilled workers, as opposed to the older population, who were primarily unskilled blue-collar workers. Some 30 families in the neighbourhood were in the care of the Social Welfare Department.

In our proposal for the establishment of a neighbourhood family centre in the Eli Cohen neighbourhood we tried to provide answers to needs not being met by existing frameworks,insofar as these needs were apparent to members of the planning committee.

It was generally agreed that project activity should concentrate on early childhood education and programs for mothers (both in their capacity as educators and as home-makers). The proposed program hoped to meet the needs of parents by providing them with relevant knowledge, skills and counselling, the needs of children for learning opportunities and stimulation via appropriate play activity and contact with other children and adults, and the social needs of mothers who find it hard to free themselves from the care of the children within the home.

In the absence of a suitable public building it was proposed to convert two adjacent ground-floor flats into a neighbourhood centre, one section of which would be set aside for a laundromat and home-makers' club for mothers. Some of the envisioned activities were:

1. mothers' and toddlers groups and activity and discussion groups for mothers who were at home in the mornings,with the main emphasis on learning through doing, observation and discussion;
2. afternoon play-groups for pre-school children and parents, providing facilities for constructive play and opportunities for parents to become involved with their children;
3. courses and lectures on matters connected with the home and the family.

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It was hoped that the centre would serve as a meeting-place and social club for neighbourhood women and as a base for such activities as they would want to organize for themselves.

In March 1978, we applied to the director of AMIGUR's * Department of Social Welfare for permission for the use of two apartments. Amigur agreed to finance the rather extensive renovations needed, as well as installing the washing machines for the laundromat. More than a year elapsed until the centre, staffed by graduates of the first training course for para-professional educational counsellors, was finally opened in December 1979.

Outreach work was carried out systematically by the staff of the centre, and meetings were held with groups of women from the neighbourhood. By February 1980, several activity and discussion groups were meeting regularly on a weekly basis: a toy-making workshop, a discussion group on problems of child-rearing, and a women's consciousness-raising group. Another group met for a number of evening sessions to discuss problems of family health.

Four afternoons weekly, the centre provided a wide range of enrichment activities for young children: a reading corner, a creative play area (paintings, pasting, modelling, drawing); and area for make-believe play; games, puzzles and didactic toys; a listening corner for music and stories, and so forth. Children were able to move freely from activity to activity. An average of 40-50 children in the age-range of 3-7 participated in these activities daily. An attendence log was kept of both children and mothers visiting the centre, and mothers were encouraged to visit the centre in the afternoons together with their children. By means of these enrichment activities and the wide range of toys, books and materials in the centre which are not normally available to parents, we hoped to demonstrate to the latter the educational value of play and to encourage them to play with their children in the centre and at home.

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* AMIGUR- housing authority of the Jewish Agency, providing low-cost rental housing in development towns.

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The Ben Gurion Neighbourhood Family Centre

In the autumn of 1978, we began to work with families in the new Ben Gurion neighbourhood within the framework of the EMRA home-visiting program, and the need arose for another neighbourhood centre. Since no facilities were available in the neighbourhood itself which could serve as a neighbourhood centre, we decided to establish the centre in the 'Well-Baby Clinic', located on the outskirts of the neighbourhood, which had been vacated and which was offered to us for this purpose. This facility was renovated according to our specifications; we had already begun to move in our equipment when we were informed that the building was needed to temporarily house the second "Well-Baby Clinic', whose building in turn was undergoing renovations..... however, a nearby unused kindergarten was made available to us and renovated, and opened its doors to the neighbourhood at the end of May 1980, with a program of activities similar to the one in the Eli Cohen neighbourhood centre.

2. *Linking School, Home and Community: The Community School Project*

1977-1978

Complementary to the informal community-education program at the neighbourhood family centres, the planning committee proposed a program which would function within the formal educational framework - the schools serving the neighbourhood - and would aim to forge more effective links between the home, the school and the community. The program outlined by the planning committee in February 1978 set itself the following objectives:

1. *to increase cooperation between teachers, parents and members of the community in educational, social and other activities and to create an atmosphere of mutual trust and shared responsibility;*
2. *to strengthen parents' self confidence in their role as educators, to help them acquire the necessary knowledge and skills and to encourage their closer involvement in the educational activities of the school;*
3. *to encourage teachers to recruit the aid and support of the parents;*
4. *to foster involvement, a sense of mutual responsibility and cooperation between the school and the community by cultivating the relationship between the two and opening the schools to community activity.*

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Two primary schools in the vicinity of the Eli Cohen neighbourhood were selected as sites for the project: the Givah school (secular) and the Yeshurun school. Both schools suffered from a high turn-over of teachers, and from the fact that many of the teachers were inexperienced and often not residents of the town. However, both headmasters were enthusiastic about the project and prepared to cooperate.

Shortly after the approval of the program, we met with the staff of both schools; despite the trepidation and anxiety which the idea of parental involvement evoked in some of the teachers - as well as scepticism regarding the possibility of affecting parental attitudes and behaviour, the teachers agreed to cooperate.

In the Yeshurun school, it was decided to begin initially with a program fostering parent involvement in the lower grades, 1-3, in the form of structured meetings of the parents and class teachers, to discuss questions of education, child development and curriculum. Parents were invited to visit during lessons, at times previously arranged. An expert in community organizational development met with the team of teachers at regular meetings at which they dealt with problems which had been raised during the meeting with the parents, and worked out ways and means for future activities.

At the Givah school, the existence of parent committees in each class facilitated parent involvement from the beginning. In February 1978, the program was presented to the parent committees' representatives and to the teachers, and a joint planning committee was set up. The first activity planned and carried out by this team was a parent-teacher Purim party. The shared work and the success of the evening itself, in which a large percentage of the parents participated, helped to break the ice and smoothed the way for further joint activities.

Attempts were made to deepen the involvement of parents in the life of the school and to further cooperation between parents and teachers. Parents visited the social studies classes of their children and related personal stories of their immigration and the start of their new life in the country and in Ofakim.

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At the end of the school year a second joint parent-teacher event was organized an 'end of the school year' party. These activities contributed significantly towards strengthening the relationship between parents and teachers.

1978-1979

With the beginning of the 1978-1979 school year, a liason team, composed of a teacher and a parent (each employed on a half-time basis) was engaged in each of the schools. This team was charged with planning and organizing a variety of activities aimed at increasing parent involvement in the school and enhancing parent-teacher cooperation. The two teams had previously participated in a workshop in communication skills organized by the project. During the first half of the school year efforts were concentrated on organizing a 'school for parents', offering a variety of weekly study and activity groups. Child-minding facilities made possible the participation of mothers with small children. The liason teams visited parents in their homes and organized parents meetings in order to stimulate the parents' interest. In each of the schools some 50 to 60 parents signed up for one or more activity or study groups.

The Givah school

In the Givah school, the parents of each class elected representatives, who together with a group of teachers functioned as a joint planning committee. This parent-teacher committee met regularly throughout the school year and constituted in effect a core group of involved parents and teachers committed to cooperation with parents.

A great deal of effort was invested by the parent-teacher committee and the liason team in publicizing the 'school for parents'. Initially, interest was keen, but as the year progressed, attendance dropped and we were forced to close some of the groups. In many ways the 'school for parents' was a disappointment. The level of participation was disproportionate to the time and effort invested in organizing and publicizing the activity, and despite the many home-visits, the parents whom we had hoped to attract remained passive. The parents who came were generally the younger, upwardly mobile ones who in any case took an interest in school affairs, and tended to be involved in community life.

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On the other hand, the joint parent-teacher celebrations which had been organized the year before under the auspices of the project had been resoundingly successful and it was selfunderstood that they would be repeated and expanded.

Under the guidance of the parent -teacher committee, several holiday celebrations and a museum outing were organized. Parents and teachers together organized the programs, prepared refreshments and entertainment, and sold tickets. In addition two issues of a mimeographed parent-teacher magazine were put out.

Despite the fact that there had been almost general agreement on the importance of parent involvement at class-room level, attempts at implementation of a systematic program of activities proved to be surprisingly difficult and frustrating. Many of the teachers approached the organization of these activities with less than the necessary enthusiasm and energy; parental response was partial - and the teachers, disappointed, quickly retreated, arguing that the parents who participated were the 'good parents' who were no problem in any case, and that most parents were only interested in the progress of their own child, criticizing the teacher for any shortcomings in this direction but unwilling to contribute anything themselves.

Towards the end of the second year, the project's evaluation team interviewed teachers and parents and met with the liason team, the headmaster and the joint parent-teacher planning committee to discuss the progress which had been made in their eyes towards implementing the program which they had planned at the beginning of the year. What emerged from these discussions was that although both teachers and parents no longer questioned the need and importance of cooperation with one another, their interpretations of what this implied were rather different. The teachers' primary concern was to impart information to the pupil - and insofar as the parent could help in this task, they welcomed cooperation with him.

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They tended however, to view their relationship with the parents as a rather one-directional one: the teacher explaining to parents, teaching the parents so that they in turn could help their children study more effectively. To this end they were willing to devote time and effort, and the indifference of those parents who did not see fit to come to parents' meetings was incomprehensible to them, and in a way, a personal affront. On the other hand, they were wary of those parents who were anxious and ready to share their pedagogic concerns, fearing an intrusion into what they viewed as their exclusive realm, and felt also somewhat threatened by the headmaster's welcoming stance towards parents, concerned that the latter would take advantage of the new 'liberalism'. The fact that many of the teachers were young and relatively inexperienced undoubtedly contributed to their hesitation and reluctance. Nothing in their training had prepared them for work with parents and they were wary of any infringement of their 'professional' status.

The parents on the other hand, were happy with the recognition which they had been accorded as partners in the educational process. Those parents who had been active in the parents' committee felt at home and welcome in the school, and some of them had formed the habit of dropping by when they had time for an informal chat with the headmaster or the teachers. They were on the whole interested in increasing the role of parents in the school and in providing a varied program of activities for parents - but themselves lacked the time to contribute effectively towards the implementation of these ideas. For them, the informal get-togethers and meetings with other parents and teachers played an important social role, and the various social events provided the kind of short-term challenge to which they could best respond.

The liason team had also not succeeded in meeting expectations: the teacher who made up one half of the team was young and inexperienced, and totally lacking in status and authority vis-a-vis the other teachers; and her liason function degenerated into a purely technical one. The mother (a para-professional community worker) who constituted the other half of the team came to be regarded by parents and teachers (as well as by her own eyes) as a member of the school staff - but this in some ways added to her status in the eyes of the parents and helped her in her liason work with them.

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There was general concern about the fact that despite concerted efforts many parents had remained unaffected and uninvolved. Parents and teachers alike felt that the solution (if there was one) lay in the direction of increased attempts to involve parents at the class level - in direct relation to their own child.

We came to the conclusion that our expectations had been somewhat unrealistic. Most of the obstacles which we had encountered could have been predicted, in view of the fact that they were rooted in the structure of the educational system. Full implementation of the community-school project's aims could be possible only if the participants in the endeavour (the teaching staff, parents, and community) would modify their existing priorities, attitudes, and patterns of behaviour. Change of this kind is a gradual and difficult process under the most favourable circumstances (i.e., if the pressure for change comes from within); when the change agent is an ousider, he is far more likely to meet with scepticism and resistance. On one hand, we had underestimated the degree to which teachers might feel threatened by increased parent involvement- which could also be viewed as parent interference. On the other, we had assumed that parents were waiting for the opportunity to become involved in school affairs- only to discover what should perhaps have been self-evident: that there were indifferent parents, as there were concerned ones. We were most successful in those areas of activities which took place on neutral ground where neither side felt threatened (i.e., celebrations, outings); once parents and teachers felt at ease with each other and on a more equal footing, they were readier to work together to further what in effect is their common concern - the child's education and development.

<u>The Yeshurun school</u>

As pointed out earlier, the pupils at the religious Yeshurun school came from traditional, observant homes and from families in a lower socio-economic bracket. These factors acted to create a very different climate for the development of project activities.

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In the religious school, the roles of teacher and parent are clearly demarcated, with each assigned his defined place in a hierarchial ordering of statuses and deferring to the authority of his superiors: headmaster, teacher, parent and pupil. Insofar as the majority of parents attended the parents' meetings held 2-3 times yearly, they did so in a passive capacity, expecting the teacher to inform and instruct them. The teachers, for their part, unquestioningly accepted the fact that they bore a duty towards the families of their pupils, and responded positively to the idea of organizing activities for parents in the school and reaching out to parents by means of home-visits in order to encourage them to participate.

The mothers who signed up for the 'school for parents' were attracted primarily by the various handicraft and activity groups offered: the utilitarian value of the skills they acquired justified in their eyes the expenditure of time spent on themselves. Lacking verbal skills and distrusting abstractions, they saw little point in group discussions and perhaps felt threatened by the spectre of earlier failures called up by arithmetic or literacy classes. The small minority which did attend these classes made excellent progress, but these were on the whole women who were highly motivated and grasped at opportunities for self-advancement. For many of the participants, the very act of attending activity at regular intervals and at a set time was in itself a new experience, and as such, of some importance. It demanded of them to plan ahead, leaving the household to husband and older children (sometimes at the risk of conflict with the former); to dress-up themselves and the small children whom they brought with them, and to temporarily abandon cooking, cleaning and all the other aspects of their daily routine.

1979-1980

The Yeshurun school

During the 1978-1979 school-year, the 'school for parents' had been very successful, and the school was anxious to continue the program. However, the teacher who had been responsible for liason with parents returned to her classroom tasks - and we were left with the problem of who would assume responsibility for organizing the 'school for parents' and other parent involvement activities.

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In addition, the school's headmaster had left, and the new headmaster was struggling to solve basic problems of staffing, curriculum, etc. Assigning an experienced teacher to the job was out of the question; nor were we successful in finding a suitable parent. Finally, one of the substitute teachers was assigned to deal with the organizational and administrative aspects of the 'school for parents' and one of the more concerned and active mothers undertook the responsibility for liason with parents. The 'school for parents' got off to a late start in January, with some 40 mothers participating in 5 activity and study groups - handicrafts, macrame, baking, a literacy class, and a discussion group on the child and the family. All of these groups were led by teachers, and continued to meet weekly until the end of the year. This was however a far cry from the kind of program we had hoped to develop, whose basic concepts were very foreign to the headmaster and the teachers. Both headmasterand teachers felt themselves responsible for educating the parents of their pupils, and involving them in the life of the school - but as beneficiaries of what the school had to offer, rather than as equal partners.

The Givah school

In the Givah school, all our efforts to have one of the senior teachers assigned to liason-work with parents and teachers were of no avail. The full brunt of this task now fell on the shoulders of the para-professional community worker who was herself a parent in the school. Despite her high prestige (and resulting success) amongst the parents, her lack of recognized authority within the school hierarchy served to minimalize effective cooperation on the part of the teachers. On the other hand, parents were more than willing to involve themselves in affairs of the school. The parents' committee, composed of representatives elected by the parents of each class (a total of about 35 people) met at the beginning of the school year with the headmaster and a committee of teachers and prepared a program for parent involvement at three levels:

1. The class level: It was suggested that each homeroom teacher meet monthly with the parents of her class in an informal setting devoted to any of all of the following:

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a. Educational problems of the class.
b. Demonstration lessons devoted to new curricula or teaching methods.
c. Planning of joint parent-pupil activities (outings, celebrations, get-togethers).
d. Planning educational projects in which the parents would play an active part.

2. The grade level: Activities involving all the parents of pupils in the relevant grade or grades: for example, joint activities of first grade children's parents and parents of kindergarten children who would be entering the school.

3. The school level: Since this was the level at which we originally initiated activities in the school, a certain tradition had already established itself - for example, the parent-teacher Purim celebration and an and-of-year party, the yearly parent-teacher outing, and the 'school for parents'- and it was inconceivable that these not continue. Therefore, it was decided to reinforce these activities which had proven themselves as successful, as well as exploring new avenues.

The parent's committee elected 5 sub-committees from its midst, thus assuring that all its members would be actively involved and that tasks would be equally shared. The following sub-committees were chosen:

a. Editorial committee: Charged with producing a joint parent-teacher-pupil magazine, to appear 3-4 times yearly.

b. Community-aid committee: Responsible for extending aid to needy families and assisting malfunctioning families. The committee hoped to function in close cooperation with the teachers who would be able to approach it for help in those cases where they felt the child to be affected by unfavourable conditions in the home.

c. Studies committee: Responsible for organizing the 'school for parents' which planned to offer courses in English, Hebrew language, arithmetic, current events, and parent-child relations.

d. Cultural committee: Responsible for organizing parent-teacher celebrations, outings, and other cultural events.

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e. Education committee: Which planned to meet regularly with the headmaster and teachers' representatives to discuss various educational matters concerning the school. When it came to implementation of the above proposals, the lack of effective communication and cooperation between parents and teachers came into focus.

. The plans for parent involvement at the class-room and grade levels could obviously only be carried out with the full cooperation of the school, its headmaster and teachers, while the school-level activities depended primarily on the initiative and devoted efforts of the parents' committee and the parents' liason worker. Not surprisingly, little progress was made towards implementing the plans for parent involvement at the class-room level, despite numerous planning sessions involving parents' committees and teachers. No sustained program of activities emerged. The teachers were on the whole resentful of this added burden and resentfulness turned into bitterness when their sporadic efforts met with only partial response from the parents. By mid-year, we decided to abandon this effort, since our objectives were not being achieved. The head-master conceded that given the existing priorities in the school, it was impossible to pressure the teachers, who did not believe in the value of what we were trying to do.

The parents' sub-committees functioned quite effectively throughout the year. The editorial committee put out two issues of the parent-teacher magazine. The community-aid committee made a survey of children in need of assistance. However, the form which this assistance finally took was financial: help in buying books, school uniforms, or covering the cost of school outings. A special levy was collected from all the parents to cover these expenditures. The studies committee tried to reorganize the 'school for parents'; however, of the six classes for which parents registered, only two continued to function throughout the year: elementary and intermediate English, which were perceived as being instrumental in furthering the upwardly-mobile aspiration of the parents who participated in them.

The cultural committee organized two successful events - the traditional Purim carnaval and a bon-fire for all the school on the L'ag B'Omer festival. The education committee also met regularly with the head-master; however, rather than utilizing the committee to involve parents more effectively in educational issues, the latter stressed issues such as improvement in the physical facilities of the school and problems of discipline. In an effort to bridge the gap between the parents and the teachers, the parents' committee, with the assistance of the National Parents' Committee, organized a weekend seminar for teachers and parents in May. 36 people participated in the two-day program of lectures and discussions and the seminar contributed significantly towards better understanding between the two groups. Shortly after the seminar, a new issue arose, which quickly overshadowed and pushed into the background all other activities. The headmaster's application for tenure, which had been approved by the regional office of the Ministry of Education was blocked by the mayor of Ofakim. Although the official reason given was that he was not a resident of Ofakim, it was understood by all concerned that the real reason was political. The parents' committee threw its full weight behind the headmaster, organizing demonstrations, delegations to the Ministry of Education and the Parliamentary Education Committee, petitions, etc. Two years of working together in the project had turned the group into an effective force to be reckoned with. The project's role in this process (and willy-nilly, in the political processes in which the committee now became involved) was not overlooked. The end of the school-year co-incided with the negotiations between the Institute for Education and Community Development and the Ofakim Local Council regarding the continuation of the project for an additional three years and the establishment of a local association to manage the project. The events at the Givah school at one point led to a complete breakdown of these negotiations. Conditional to the agreement which was eventually concluded was the discontinuation of our activities in the schools.

One almost self-evident conclusion which emerged from our experience in both schools was that the more one moves from the informal educational setting of the home-intervention program, the neighbourhood centre, or even the semi-formal environment of the kindergarten towards the highly structured framework of the formal educational system, innovation and change become more difficult to introduce - especially if the change agent is from <u>outside</u> the educational establishment.

Without the legitimation of the latter, entry into the system is almost impossible. Even when, as in our case, the inspectorate and the headmasters are receptive and cooperative, the task still remains formidable. Objective constraints: pressures on the teachers from the educational and political establishments and from parents themselves, to produce 'results' (measurable by competitive test scores); a plethora of educational initiatives from within the system - new curricula and technologies, in-service training programs, etc.; and the fact that a third of the teachers commuted from outside the town served to limit the teachers' receptiveness and capacity for coping with yet another program making demands on them and which they viewed as yet another educational panacea. The shortage of good teachers led to an understandable reluctance on the part of the headmasters to assign an experienced teacher to the role of liason with parents. All of these factors seemed to militate against the introduction of the kind of structural and ideological changes which were essential if a program of parent and community involvement in the schools was to succeed. In retrospect, I believe that given more time and experience, real progress might have been achieved. It is unfortunate that the political climate in the town did not permit us to pursue this direction any further.

3. Parent Involvement in the Kindergartens

The child's (and the parents') first contact with formal education is in the kindergarten. Thus any effort to foster parental involvement to forge home-school links must begin at the point of entry into the school system.

Towards the end of the 1977-1978 school-year we met with the Director of the Ofakim Department of Education, the kindergarten supervisor, and the Ministry of Education's kindergarten inspectors to discuss the development of a program fostering parent involvement in the kindergartens. It was generally felt that before such a program could be developed, it would be necessary to effect changes in the teachers' attitudes, to encourage greater openness and sensitivity, and to alleviate some of the anxieties and suspicions which often colour their relations with parents. The outcome of these discussions was the decision to organize a workshop in parent involvement in the coming school-year, which would precede actual parent-involvement activities.

19 of the 23 kindergarten teachers in the town participated in a series of workshops devoted to the following issues:

1. Clarification of the respective expectations of the parent from the kindergarten and kindergarten teacher and of the teacher from the parent; the kindergarten teacher's objectives and the various means available to her in attaining these objectives.
2. Analysis of potential conflicts between parents' and teachers' expectations and the reasons for the existant gaps in expectations.
3. Bridging the gap between parents' and teachers expectations and attitudes, and defusing potential conflict situations; investigation of various means and ways of increasing parent involvement in the kindergarten, appropriate to the specific conditions of the kindergarten and the character and expectations of the parent group.
4. Simulation and role play: the parent and the kindergarten teacher in various situations of cooperation and conflict.
5. Parent-teacher relations.
6. Children's work with creative materials in the kindergarten (in preparation for parents' meetings devoted to this topic).
7. Observations and evaluation of the child's development as a means towards improving communication with the individual parent.

In February 1979, the teachers who had participated in the workshop now sub-divided into three groups, with each group undertaking to plan and prepare a pilot-project involving parents in the life of the kindergarten. The topics chosen were:

1. <u>Learning Readiness</u>: The group worked on preparing written material for parents describing the curriculum of the kindergarten, and suggesting activities that parents could work on with the child in the home: these were sent to the parents by the kindergarten teacher at regular intervals. 5 teachers participated in this project.

2. *Improving parents' attitudes towards children's creative work:*
The 8 teachers in this group planned the following activities which took place in 5 kindergartens:

   a. *a display of children's works;*
   b. *workshop for parents: working with creative materials (collage, finger-paints, clay, etc.);*
   c. *film-strips and guided discussion with parents on the role of creativity in the child's development.*

3. *Parent participation in regular kindergarten activities: this group of 5 teachers planned the following activities: preparation of Purim costumes for the children in the kindergarten with the parents; parent discussion groups meeting with a psychologist and community health nurse.*

Evaluating the achievements of our work with the kindergarten teachers at the end of the year, we felt that considerable progress had been made. There was a marked change in the teachers' attitude towards parents: initial wariness had been replaced by openness and even eagerness for greater cooperation and involvement with the children's families; teachers were on the whole more willing to invest time and effort in this direction. A number of them had moved beyond the jointly-planned activities of the workshop into initiatives and ideas of their own for increased parent involvement. Among parents too a change could be perceived and the idea that parents were expected to play an active role in the life of the kindergarten began to take root.

After a year of preparatory work devoted primarily to enhancing the kindergarten teachers' understanding of the importance of active cooperation with parents in the education of the child and appreciation of the parents' role in the educational process, we felt that an adequate groundwork had been laid for the development of a program of parent involvement activities reaching all the kindergartens of Ofakim. The pilot project in which the kindergarten teachers had participated in the latter half of the prior school-year had given them some idea of the wide range of possibilities open to them.

At the beginning of the 1979-1980 school-year, the project team was joined by one of the kindergarten teachers (on special leave for a year) who assumed responsibility for liason with the 24 kindergartens in Ofakim.

We decided to continue the monthly workshop sessions with the kindergarten teachers, concentrating on two topics which we felt would further reinforce understanding and cooperation between the teachers and the individual parents: observation and monitoring of the child's development and behavior, and effective communication with parents on this subject. The eight workshop sessions were conducted by an educational psychologist from the Negev Regional College and an experienced kindergarten teacher from one of the neighbouring kibbutzim, who had joined the project staff. This team, together with the liason teacher and the kindergarten supervisor, visited each kindergarten at the beginning of the year, in order to advise and guide the kindergarten teachers in planning their individual program of parent involvement activities. The liason teacher continued these visits throughout the year, assisting the teachers in various aspects of program implementation.

We had recommended that each kindergarten teacher should chose at least one project on which she would work throughout the year with parents, in addition to regular parents' meetings (usually held every trimester) and on-going contact with parents via visits to the home or parents' visits to the kindergarten. Most of the teachers opted for one or more of the following projects:

1. workshops with parents to prepare didactic games;
2. mini-lending libraries;
3. parent discussion groups.

17 kindergarten teachers themselves participated in workshops to prepare didactic games, and then organized 3 or more workshop-sessions with parents in their kindergarten.

Another 13 teachers organized mini-lending libraries in the kindergarten, consisting of 20 books bought with funds collected by the parents, and 20 which we added. Books were exchanged weekly (in some cases, this became the responsibility of a parent-volunteer) thus assuring that each child went home weekly with a book which the parent could read to the child. The parents of each kindergarten participating in this project attended a lecture on how to tell stories to children and on how to chose appropriate books for their child.

5 teachers participated in a workshop for discussion leaders organized by the Educational Television, in preparation for running discussion groups on parent-child relations (in conjunction with the Education Television's program 'Family Situations'). However, the number of parents ready to participate in discussion groups was minimal, and the program never proceeded beyond this preparatory stage.

A small number of teachers chose other areas of activity with parents: work with creative materials, handicrafts, etc. At the end of the school-year, several kindergartens organized outings and picnics for parents and children, with the help of the project and the municipality.

One of the major problems confronting the kindergarten teachers is their isolation - both physical, since the kindergartens are dispersed throughout the town and not connected organically to the primary school system, and psychological, since these teachers have little contact with their peers in the larger towns and are cut off from many of the resources available to the latter. We felt that an urgent need existed for an early childhood resource centre providing the nursery school and kindergarten teachers with didactic materials and instruction and serving as a permanent meeting-place and workshop. Plans were laid for organizing such a centre in the coming school-year at the neighbourhood family centre in the Ben Gurion district utilizing part of the area of the centre for this purpose.

4. *The Clinic Play-corners*

Pediatric care for the children of Ofakim is provided by Kupat Holim (Histadrut Health Fund), responsible for curative health services, and the Ministry of Health's Family Health Stations, or 'Well-Baby Clinics', which concern themselves with preventive health care. In effect, all the town's infants and toddlers and their mothers are regular visitors at one or the other of these clinics. During peak hours, each waiting room may contain up to 20 children, their parents and siblings. The boredom and discomfort attendant on waiting in cramped and crowded quarters tend to increase tension and lead to friction which begs relief. the same time, the waiting-rooms of the pediacric clincis serve as an involuntary meeting-place and centre for parents and young children, providing in effect both the setting and the 'captive audience' for the instruction of parents in educational activities and play with their children who meanwhile are stimulated and entertained in a relaxed and happy environment.

Towards the end of 1978, we were invited by Dr. Boaz Porter, the chief pediatrician, to open two play corners in the waiting-rooms of the Kupat Holim 'B' Clinic, whose pediatric services had recently been integrated under one joint team of Ministry of Health and Kupat Holim nurses and doctors.

These play corners, staffed by two of the project's para-professional counsellors, began functioning in the spring of 1979. In planning this project, we aimed to achieve both immediate, short-range objectives and long-range goals. In the first category, we defined the following objectives:

1. *alleviation of tedium by providing both children and parents with stimulating and constructive activities;*
2. *improved tension-management and the creation of a relaxed atmosphere conducive to better communication and cooperation between staff and clients;*
3. *stimulation of interest in further educational and community activities;*
4. *dissemination of basic information on child-rearing practices, preventive health measures, etc.*

In the long-run, we hoped to effect some improvement in parental competency and functioning, resulting from:

1. *hightened awareness of the child's educational and health needs;*
2. *increased knowledge, skill and awareness of choices of behaviour available to the parent in answering those needs;*
3. *improved attitudes towards child-rearing;*
4. *improved patterns of socialization and parent-child interaction.*

An area was cleared in each clinic waiting-room and equipped with appropriate toys, books and play materials - both commercial and home-made from scrap-materials. The para-professional counsellors were charged with activating and guiding the children and their parents in play activities, modeling appropriate adult-child interaction and stimulating parent interest.

The play corners were enthusiastically received by both staff and clients. The availability of interesting and constructive activities to occupy the children while waiting for the nurse or doctor had the immediate effect of reducing tension. However, implementation of the educational goals of the project proved to be somewhat more difficult.

The physical environment - crowding, lack of clear demarkation of play areas - as well as the brief and sporadic nature of the contact with parents, made work in this setting especially difficult and challenging. The inexperienced counsellors tended to engage the children in play directly, rather than involving the parents in the activity or engaging them in conversation on child-rearing or related subjects. Nor was their function always clear to the staff and to the clients - who often tended to regard them as 'toy-ladies' or childminders. Others, however, welcomed the opportunity to play on the carpet with their children and the opportunity for their babies to interact in a play environment with other small children - something that not every infant or toddler has exposure to at home.

The clinic play-corners, unlike the carefully pre-planned programs at the neighbourhood centres or the home-intervention program, was initiated in an 'ad hoc' fashion, to meet urgent needs and to take advantage of an opportunity that presented itself.

In April 1980, we opened and additional play-corner in the 'A' Family Health Station (the 'Well-Baby' clinic). This setting proved to be much easier to work in, since the children were all either infants or toddlers (in the Kupat Holim clinic we had had to adapt ourselves to meet the needs of older children also). There was less crowding and we ourselves were by now more experienced.

Towards the end of the year, it became clear that if we were to achieve the objectives we had set ourselves, a great deal of effort would have to be devoted to developing a more structured program and providing more guidance and support for the para-professional staff working in what proved to be the most difficult of all the settings in which we were involved.

Within the framework of the weekly in-service training sessions, the counsellors began preparing sample toys and toy-making instructions, working through in group discussion the problems and difficulties they encountered in trying to interest and activate parents and defining their own function more clearly. At the same time, we began to develop an early childhood curriculum for use in the various programs within the scope of the project, thus laying the foundation for a more clearly defined and goal-oriented program.

Despite all the initial difficulties, the play-corners were well received by the community, which perceived them as an effective answer to a real need, and we were asked to open a fourth play-corner in the Kupat Cholim 'A' clinic.

Cooperation with the clinics' pediatric staff in planning the play-corner activities led to another joint venture, the 'Preparation for Childbirth and Parenthood' classes, aimed especially at new and inexperienced parents. Beginning in January 1980, we ran two such classes, which met for 8 sessions each. The courses were attended by women in the second trimester of their first pregnancy and their husbands, and were conducted by a team comprised of a member of the project's professional staff and a nurse from the 'Well-Baby' clinic. The curriculum was loosely based on that of the Open University's 'First Years of Life' program (including the film on childbirth). Within the framework of the course, we attempted to provide basic information regarding conception, pregnancy, and birth and help the participants prepare psychologically and physiologically for labour, birth and parenthood. The final session of the course was given over to a visit to the maternity unit of the Beersheva hospital. In addition, a small lending library of books on pregnancy, childbirth and related topics such as breast-feeding was made available, and the participants took advantage of this service, exchanging books several times during the course.

5. *The EMRA Home-Intervention Program*

1977-1978

This program (originally called the Program for the Advancement of Education and Family Welfare) was initially planned in response to the local authority's request that we design an outreach program aimed at 'deprived' families in those neighbourhoods in which the project planned to operate. In response to this request, the project's steering committee prepared a proposal for a program designed to aid families in developing the skills to function better in the education of their children and in the organization of their family life. On one hand, special emphasis was put on individual guidance of the mother in the care and education of her children during their formative years. On the other hand, the program stressed the importance of involving family members in general neighbourhood activities, especially in the planned neighbourhood family centres of the project.

The target population envisioned were 50 families from the Eli Cohen and Ben-Gurion neighbourhoods. As an integral part of the program, we proposed training a group of women from the community as para-professional counsellors. The Institute for Education and Community Development was to assume responsibility for organizing a training program for these counsellors, and for on-going supervision and professional guidance.

The program was approved in the spring of 1978, and adopted as a joint venture of Project Education and Community Development, the Educational Welfare Project of the Ministry of Education, and the Ofakim Local Council.

The program set itself the following goals.

1. *Developing tools for the instruction of parents in the education of their children by training a group of para-professional counsellors and developing a relevant plan of instruction.*
2. *Enhancing parents' awareness of their educational role and increasing their active involvement in the education of their children in the home, in the school and in the community.*

3. Raising the level of parental functioning and improving the parents' self-image.

4. Preventing cumulative cultural deprivation by teaching parents how to guide their children's development through the provision of appropriate stimulation in the context of the home.

5. Extending the scope of parental involvement in community-based educational activities in the neighbourhood and in the educational institutions, and strengthening the ties between the parents and the school.

1978-1979

Shoshana Safarzada, a local girl completing her studies for a degree in Educational Counselling at Ben-Gurion University, assumed responsibility for liason with the families in the program.

In the first stage, we collected information on the backgrounds of families in the Eli Cohen and Ben Gurion neighbourhoods with children in the 0-3 age group. All in all, information was gathered on 200 families. Thereafter, the process of selection began, until about 70 families who met the predetermined criteria for joining the program remained. Home-visits to these families were made, during which the program was explained. 37 families - half from the Eli Cohen, and half from the Ben-Gurion neighbourhood - signed up initially.

As the community became familiar with the program, many families requested to join so that we easily achieved the full complement of 50 families planned for in the program.

The training course for para-professional counsellors was opened at the end of October 1978, and ran for 7 weeks. Of the 11 women completing the course, 8 women began work in the home-intervention program.

In January 1979, the home-intervention program began operations. Since as yet we had no neighbourhood centre which could serve as base for operations, we were forced to use a classroom temporarily unoccupied in one of the schools for this purpose.

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When planning the program, we had felt that in order to provide the type of individualized counselling and guidance for which we aimed, tailored to the specific needs of each child and family, the case-load of each para-professional counsellor would have to be limited to no more than 8 families. The weekly schedule of each half-time counsellor was planned as follows:

home-visits (7-8 families)	14 hours
recording and reporting (written and oral)	2 hours
planning future home-visits	
meeting with supervisor for individual counselling and guidance	1 hour
in-service training, group discussions and lectures	4 hours
	21 hours

Shoshana Safarzada, who had been responsible for the initial selection of families for the program, briefed the para-professional counsellors on the background of the families with which they would be working and effected the initial introductions. Shoshana continued to monitor the counsellors' work with the families, meeting weekly or bi-weekly with each of the counsellors to hear their reports and advise them, and acting as liason with the relevant services and agencies in the community when necessary. A separate file was kept for each family, and this on-going record helped us both in evaluating the impact of our intervention and in planning future activities and programs geared to meet the needs of these families.

Once the counsellor had become acquainted with the family and the child and a regular time for weekly visits had been agreed upon, actual home-visiting began. The first step undertaken was that of rating the child's development in various spheres: cognitive, motor, language, social, etc. This was done by the home-visitor and the mother, using the simple rating scales developed by the South-Eastern Day Care Project of H.E.W. (reproduced in "Tuning In To Your Child" by Betty Rowen, Humanics Press, 1975) which we translated into Hebrew.

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The advantage of this rating scale was in its simplicity and the fact that it was intended for use by the non-professionals: we found that it served as an adequate indicator of the child's developmental level and as a good guide for the preparation of a work-program geared to the needs of each child. Utilizing this base-line information, the para-professional counsellors, with the help of the program's supervisors, planned each home-visit individually. Every visit - both its content and the response of child and mother - was carefully recorded, and a file was kept on each child's progress. We planned to rate the children's development at regular intervals, using these measurements and our on-going records of the home visits as a basis for evaluating the effect of the program. At the end of the year, we attempted to evaluate the impact and effect of the home-intervention program on the child and his family. Taking into account that the developmental rating scale used was a rather imprecise and generalized tool and that the assessment was made by non-professionals, we did not rely on it too heavily; however, it tended to bear out conclusions based on the written and oral reports of the home-visitors and the supervisors' observations. Stated in general terms, we felt that the home-intervention program had affected the rate of child's development: where the child's performance at the onset of intervention had been more or less normal for his age group, after some months there were definite indications that development had been speeded up, in some instances dramatically. In a number of cases, the mother's attitude towards the child's needs had undergone change, expressing itself in altered patterns of behaviour towards the child. A serendipidous by-product was the manner in which the program had managed to respond to the needs of the mother herself - for social contact, reinforcement of her sense of self-worth, etc. It could be assumed that the positive effect of the program on the mother and her sense of well-being would also have a positive effect on her interaction with the child.

The families in the program

The 'Well-Baby Clinic' proved to be the most reliable and comprehensive source of basic demographic data on families with children in the relevant age group within our catchment area. In addition, the public health nurses staffing the clinic turned out to be knowledgable, sympathetic and discreet informants regarding such delicate issues as intra-familial relations, child-rearing practices, mental and physical health, and overall family functioning.

The families selected to take part in the program were a fairly representative cross-section of the Ofakim population of child-bearing age. The collective profile of these families belied the stereotyped image (and self-image) of the town - an image derived from the realities of the 50's and early 60's.

The classic syndrome of deprivation - inadequate income, overcrowding, high birth-rate, and lack of education or occupational skills, applied to few of the families with whom we came in contact. Insofar as such 'high-risk' families were still to be found in Ofakim, they tended to be concentrated in an older age-group past child-bearing age, or to fall within the category of hard-core social cases (in which instance additional factors such as chronic illness, or mental deficiency, were usually present). Almost all of the fathers in the 200 families considered for the program were gainfully employed and able to provide their families with a reasonable standard of living. In those few households where basic amenities were found lacking, this tended to be the result of poor management rather than inadequate income. The younger families were on the whole aware of the importance of family planning, tending to limit family size (the mean number of children in the families of parents aged 20-29 in the program was 2; in the 30-40 range, 5). Insofar as housing density remained a problem, it was well on the way towards solution. One-third of the parents in the program had had some high-school education; two-thirds had completed 8 grades of elementary school.

On the basis of our first year's experience, we reached the following conclusions:

1. *Many families, while meeting their children's material needs for food, shelter and clothing, were completely unaware of the need to provide them with a stimulating and enriching environment. Books and toys were rare, and when found, often unsuitable (it was not unusual to find expensive toys put away out of the child's reach so that they should not be broken). Especially among younger families, there was often little attempt made to plan expenditures rationally, to shop economically, or to organize household tasks efficiently so as to conserve time, money and energy. The underlying cause appeared to be ignorance and lack of appropriate role-models and guidance.*

2. *Almost without exception, the families in the program could be defined as culturally and educationally deprived. In most cases, the school was the only setting providing for the child's cultural needs. Even when the parents were aware of their children's needs, they usually lacked the necessary tools and skills.*

3. *Parents who had completed high-school, though often no less in need of instruction and guidance in child-rearing than their less educated peers, were not really in need of an out-reach program, with its relatively high per-capita running costs; nor did our para-professional counsellors have the self-confidence to work with this group. These parents were however ideally suited for work in a group setting and we hoped that they would constitute the nucleus of young mothers participating in group activities in our neighbourhood centres.*

At the other end of the scale, we found that families afflicted by severe personal or social problems were usually unable to function effectively within the framework of the program, since they were often unable to meet the demands of regularity and continuity without which home-visiting cannot be sustained. Nor could the para-professional counsellor be expected to provide the kind of support which these families generally needed.

In a limited number of cases, families were found to be in need of individual and specialized attention: a husband's chronic unemployment as a result of emotional instability which prevented him from holding down a job; an older child with a severe case of cerebral palsy, with no existing provisions for the child's education or professional care; a hyperactive child diagnosed by our staff as suffering from minimal brain damage, and so forth. In these cases we were able to function effectively as a referring agency and as coordinator with the different services, while providing the family with support and encouragement. In other instances, we were approached by one or other of the agencies serving the community, for example, probation officers or social workers, regarding problems facing families in the program. On the whole we found that we had established excellent working relationships with these agencies and their staffs.

1979-1980

Evaluation of the program's effectiveness during its first year of operations (1978-1970), based on the weekly home-visit reports and case-studies devoted to each family, indicated that in those cases where the mother had cooperated with the counsellor, the program had had a positive effect on the mother's attitudes and behavioural patterns, as well as on the developmental progress of the child. We found that on the whole, these mothers came from the middle-range of working class families, with limited formal education, some awareness of the need to provide their children with more than material care only, but lacking the skills, knowledge and self-confidence to play an effective educational role. These parents often suffered from a low self-image and from psycho-social rather than material impoverishment, bearing out the contention that educational disadvantage is not of necessity concomitant with material poverty.

In planning the program the project team had envisioned a home-intervention program aimed at improving parental awareness and functioning and enhancing community involvement.

Representatives of the social services and of the Local Council who had participated in planning the program had expected it to concern itself with the over-all rehabilitation of multi-problem, malfunctioning families. Our first year's experience indeed reinforced our contention that these families would be unable to cooperate effectively with the program, and that para-professional counsellors were ill-equipped to deal with severe problems of family functioning and inter-personal relations. Insofar as such families had joined the program, they had tended to drop out quickly, unable to meet the minimal demands for cooperation, continuity, and active participation.

Re-evaluation of the original program led not so much to a re-evaluation of objectives as to a change of emphasis - stressing the role of the mother as the child's first teacher, and working with her to change priorities, attitudes and behaviour.

This sharpening of focus was expressed in the new name of the program: "EMRA" - an acronym formed from the Hebrew words 'mother'and 'teacher'. We restated the program's key objectives: the improving of parental functioning and the enhancing of the parents' self-image, by:

1. *teaching parents how to provide the child with adequate stimulation through utilization of the resources available in every home;*
2. *encouraging parents to recognize and exploit educational opportunities present in the environment and in every-day situations;*
3. *helping parents to acquire the skills, knowledge and confidence enabling them to play an active role in their children's development and education.*

By gradually reducing the emphasis on individual guidance of the parent in the home, while stressing greater involvement in group activities with children and other parents in the neighbourhood family centres, we hoped to avoid excessive dependence on the program's counsellors and supervisors. Furthermore, by encouraging parents to share in the responsibility for the running of activities in the centre, we hoped to set in motion a process of active involvement and participation in community and neighbourhood affairs.

At the operational level, a number of structural changes were introduced into the program, providing for greater overall unity and cohesiveness, while retaining the program's basic commitment to flexibility and individualization.

The lack of written materials had made it necessary for the program supervisors to plan each home-visit in detail with the para-professional counsellor, it now became essential that we develop a more structured curriculum . We thus began to develop a core program of activities around which home-visits could be structured.

The modular structure of the program and the emphasis placed on the heuristic element in each suggested activity were intended to encourage both para-professional counsellors and parents to devise their own additional or alternative activities and to encourage the child to do the same. We felt that this was an important element in fostering a sense of competency and self-reliance. A key factor in all activities was the stress placed on the active involvement of the parent with the child.

The core program, consisting of sequenced activities appropriate to the age and developmental level of each child, provided for unified structure while retaining maximal flexibility. The program took into account the heterogeneity of the target population-differences in the age, education and parenting experience of the parents, as well as chronological and developmental differences of the children. The activities were geared to stimulate the child's development in different areas - cognitive, motor, social and emotional. Activities were structured around the use of simple and inexpensive toys, games and materials readily available in the home. Activities combined the use of home-made toys and found material with that of store-bought toys; the latter were in effect proto-types, and the mother was shown how 'junk' materials and every-day objects in the house could be utilized to fulfill similar function.

The counsellor decided on the order and the specific content of the home-visit in consultation with her supervisor, drawing on her own skills and inclinations for further elaboration and enrichment. The program also supplied the mothers with basic materials for making toys and games and with a limited number of bought toys and books. In addition, books, puzzles and games were periodically lent to the mother. The home visitor also had in her 'kit' a number of activities suitable for older children - for example, collage materials, play-dough, etc. This was especially useful if the home-visit took place during school vacations or in the afternoon.

Provisions were made to improve the uneven quality of reporting and evaluation, both by devoting more time and attention to training the para-professional counsellors in these skills and by developing a set of relatively simple and efficient procedures for reporting, monitoring and on-going evaluation and feed-back.

In order to encourage the families joining the program to view themselves from the beginning not as recipients of a service but as partners in a learning experience, we devised a contract , designating the responsibilities and privileges of the family on the one hand, and of the counsellor on the other. Similarly, each family was required to pay a nominal sum for participation in the program, which partially covered the expense of the materials provided.

The program's supervisors were responsible for the initial recruitment and ongoing liason with the families in the program and with the various relevant service agencies as well as for the monitoring, supervision and direction of the work of the para-professional counsellors who staffed the program.

Each counsellor met with her supervisor for 1-1½ hours weekly. At these sessions she reported on her last home-visit (verbally, in addition to her written report) to the families with whom she was working and planned her next visit.

A separate file was maintained for each child, containing the weekly home-visit reports submitted by the home-visitor, the supervisor's comments and the developmental evaluation forms filled out periodically by the home-visitor and mother. Both of these served to monitor the child's progress. A file was also kept for each family, containing basic demographic data, the report on initial contact with the family, and subsequent evaluations of parent-child relations and patterns of parental behaviour made by the home-visitor. For four hours weekly, the para-professional counsellors met for in-service training sessions. A part of each weekly session was devoted to group discussion of problems encountered in the field and to case studies.

Another new element in the program was the introduction of monthly group-meetings of mothers. The combination of individualized guidance by means of home visits geared to the specific needs of each child and mother, combined with group meetings at the centres, was intended to achieve the following:

1. extending and deepening the involvement of the family in the program;
2. providing opportunities for parents to meet, interact and learn from each other (especially important for young mothers living in relative isolation);
3. familiarizing and encouraging the parents to utilize the neighbourhood centre as a resource centre and meeting place;
4. welding the families in the program into a cohesive group potentially exerting a positive influence on the functioning of the community.

6. <u>Training Local Women as Para-professional Counsellors</u>

The idea of training members of the community to run project activities, rather than 'importing' professionals from outside the community was one of the guiding precepts of the project from the moment of its inception. Thus, in the first project proposal submitted to the Bernard van Leer Foundation in the spring of 1977, we find the following objective stated:

"The project will facilitate the training of members of the local population in the fields of education and community work, in order to decrease the community's dependence on outside elements and enhance the community's capacity to respond effectively to the problems and challenges with which it is faced".

And yet again, in the same document, under the heading of 'Strategy and Method' the following statement appears:

"Drawing on the skills and expertise at its disposal, the project team will guide and train local people to implement and run their own programs, aiming to make these programs self-sustaining and gradually reducing the dependency of the community on outside help".

1978-1979

The training of a team of para-professional counsellors was thus an integral part of the operational plan approved by the project's steering committee in the spring of 1978. The Institute for Education and Community Development assumed responsibility for planning and conducting the first training course for para-professional counsellors, aimed at providing them with basic theoretical and practical knowledge of early childhood development and education, the family, the community, and inter-personal communications.

The following is an outline of the above-mentioned course:

Training Course For Para-Professional Educational Counsellors

1. *Date:* 29.10.1978 - 14.12.1978.
2. *Time Structure:* 5 days per week from 8.30 to 12.30 a.m. Each day: 2 units of 1-3/4 hours each a total of 70 units, 35 days, 122 hours.
3. *Method:* The course included lectures, group discussions, workshops, observations and field trips. The emphasis was on developing the practical skills needed to fill a counselling role, through practice and application of the theoretical material to real life situations.

4. Curriculum:

The child:	growth, development and education of the young child;
The family:	roles in the family; family dynamics;
The community:	socio-historical background, demographic structure; institutions and services;
Methodology:	observation, recording and reporting; the use of games, creative materials, movement, children's literature; home-made didactic toys:'trash to treasure'; sequential learning activities;
Inter-personal Communication:	sensitivity training; the values and principles of education and community work.

5. Criteria for Selection of Candidates:

a. Ofakim resident;
b. interest in education and in working with young children;
c. motivation towards work with people, openness and sensivity;
d. formal education - minimum 10 years;
e. mother of one or more children;
f. reliability and dependability.

6. Selection Process

a. Personal interview, visit to candidate's home, group interview. (A team of local and Institute professionals conducted these interviews).
b. At first, social workers, community workers, community health nurses, etc. were asked to recommend suitable candidates. Later on the course was publicised in the local press and by public notices.

40 candidates applied, of whom 14 were accepted to the course. Of these, three dropped out for personal or family reasons; the remaining 11 completed the course. (Despite the fact that it had become clear early on that some of the participants were not suited for home-visiting or other programs, we enabled all of the participants to complete the course, since all of them were highly motivated and personally derived great benefits from their participation). It had been made clear from the beginning that no obligation existed to employ all of the course graduates.

All the lecturers were impressed by the eagerness and receptiveness of the participants- however, it was felt that their intellectual level was too low (despite the fact that all of them had completed 10 or more years of school), and that many of the women found it difficult to express themselves in writing and were unused to dealing with written material at even a simple level. It was generally concluded, both in the staff discussions at the end of the course and more significantly, in the discussions devoted to project evaluation at the end of the year when we were also able to relate to the women's performance in the field, that the initial selection of candidates should be more stringent and that more emphasis should be placed on native intelligence and potential skills (difficult as these might be to evaluate) and less on formal education.

Of the 11 women completing the course, 8 began work as para-professional counsellors: the four considered best qualified, on the pre-determined basis of half-time employment; the other four, of whose abilities we were uncertain, at half that. Of the remaining three, one chose to go to work for a women's organization on a voluntary basis, and two eventually were employed by the project to run the play-corners in the 'Well-Baby Clinic'. Our lack of stringency in initial selection of candidates for the course, and our relative leniency in employing the para-professional counsellors (hoping that time and experience would make up for other lacks) proved to be self-defeating: the women employed on less than a half-time basis were frustrated by the fact that they were earning so little, and left after a couple of months. Of the initial 8, only 4 completed the year. Of these, two terminated their work with the program at the end of the year in order to take more lucrative full-time positions. (These were also the most highly educated women in the group). Without doubt, the course had contributed a great deal to the personal development of all the women who had participated in it, and indirectly increased the cadre of local women active in their community. As far as the program was concerned however, it meant that we had to train a new group of counsellors to answer the needs of next year's program.

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In-service Training

It was our firm belief that regular in-service training was an essential component in the work-life of the para-professional, an essential support-structure. We thus planned a program of weekly in-service training sessions, conducted primarily by the project's professional staff. From time to time, guest lecturers were invited to present special topics. In-service training sessions were devoted partially to subjects which had not been covered by the course curriculum, and partly to discussion of problems which had come up in the course of the week's work.

1978-1979

On the basis of our experiences from the prior year, we introduced a number of changes, both in the selection procedures and the structure, content and methodology of the course. It was decided to shorten the course from seven to four weeks, since it was felt that some of the material initially dealt with in the course itself would be more effectively absorbed if dealt with at later stage after the acquisition of some experience in the field to which the women could relate. Thus, we planned in advance for a far more structured and intensive program of weekly in-service training sessions.

As previously , social workers, community health nurses, etc. were approached and asked to recommend likely candidates, and the course was publicised by notices in public places. Each candidate was required to fill out a questionnaire and to submit a curriculum vitae. After initial screening, likely candidates were visited in their homes by a project team, with the purpose of becoming acquainted with the candidate in her 'natural surroundings'.

Following this step, each candidate was invited for a personal interview, on the basis of which the final selection was made.The interviewing team consisted of a senior member of the project staff, a representative of the Local Council, and the local director of the Educational Welfare Project of the Ministry of Education.

We devoted a great deal of thought to the problem of how to make our final evaluation of candidates' suitability. The ascriptive quality of interpersonal relations in a small town, as well as the loyalties and ties which develop within a group studying and working together serve to make subsequent dismissal from the course or from work extremely painful and disruptive (as we had learnt the hard way) and therefore it was important that our initial judgments be as accurate as possible. It was decided that the final decision should rest on the least objective of the chosen criteria - the collective 'gut feeling' of the interviewing team.

On the basis of experience acquired from the previous course, it was decided to emphasise learning through experiencing. Each subject dealt with theoretically was also dealt with in a workshop situation in which emphasis was placed on personal, direct contact with the subject at hand.

Regular in-service training sessions, held weekly during the year, permitted us both to pursue topics dealt with in the course in greater depth, as well as introducing new topics. As the team of para-professional counsellors gained experience in the field, their capacity to deal with theoretical material increased, as did their understanding of its practical applications.

The process of training and working with para-professional counsellors proved to be one of the most exciting and fulfilling aspects of the program: not only were we privileged to participate in the ongoing process of personal growth and development on the part of the local counsellors in our professional capacity - but we ourselves became part of what was for us no less an exciting (and sometimes humbling) learning experience.

E. Re-appraisals and Transitions

In September 1980, we submitted a request for an additional three-year grant to the Board of Trustees of the Bernard van Leer Foundation. We felt that considerable progress had been made in demonstrating the basic premises of the project:

a. that the child's innate potential can best be realized through the integration of all the elements of his world - family, school, peer-group and community - into an interactive whole, an educational ecology;

b. that effective community development and viable community life are best served by the active involvement and self-functioning of community members;

c. that a comprehensive, integrated program, combining education and community development, encompassing members of the community and relevant to its needs can serve as a vehicle for overall social change in depressed communities, off-setting the dependence and low self-image which are characteristic of these communities and which offer a negative environment for the development of children.

Progress had been made in the direction of decreasing the community's dependence on outside assistance and in improving its ability to solve its problems through reliance on its own resources. Central to these developments was the intervention strategy informing all project initiatives: participative and supportive rather than directive, involving representatives of the community as active partners in all phases of project development and implementation. The training of local women to staff the project's programs had proved to be even more successful than anticipated. Our para-professional counsellors were not only effective at their jobs, they were also a source of pride for the community and role-models for the many other women with whom they came in contact.

The initial challenge facing the project had been to identify needs and problems, and to design effective and innovative responses, drawing wherever possible on local resources and strengths. Towards the end of Phase I (1979-1980) emphasis shifted towards a concerted effort to increase the degree of responsibility and independent functioning of the para-professional staff members, while decreasing their dependence on the professional staff. No less, we had made concerted efforts to coordinate activities with other organizations and with individuals sharing our concerns, as well as trying to link our various sub-projects into neighbourhood-based 'educational ecologies'. We had also begun to concern ourselves with problems of structure and institutionalization.; we had by now come to the realization that continuity of programs and independent functioning on the part of the local staff demanded a structured, though flexible curriculum. During the second phase of the project, we planned to consolidate, intensify and refine the various programs which had been initiated and continue the process of developing structures and activities translating our approach to community and education into educational practice. We hoped to define a comprehensive model for community-based education and development, integrating the various community-education programs into an interlocking whole, with programs re-inforcing each other horizontally (i.e. early-childhood programs in the clinics, at the neighbourhood centres, in the home) and feeding into each other vertically (parent involvement in the home, in the kindergarten, in the school) sc as to create both a network and a continuum of community and parent involvement in education.

The main operational goal which we set ourselves for Phase II was institutionalization of project activities, in the belief that the acceptance of innovative programs by the community as integral components of community life was a precondition determining the ultimate viability and continuity of project activities. Growing community involvement in planning and implementation, both at the staff and the participatory levels, as well as the assumption of increased responsibility by statutory authorities for project operations, resulting from the establishment of a joint administrative framework would, it was hoped, lead to ultimate community responsibility and control of the project.

The project had begun in 1977 as a joint venture of the Institute for Education and Community Development and the Ofakim Local Council. For the first year of the project's life, the executive committee which had been appointed by the Local Council functioned very effectively. The fact that both the political establishment and the statutory agencies active in the town were represented in the committee, as well as community representatives, assured the project of broad community backing, which expressed itself in the willingness to allocate local funds to the project and to make it a partner in other endeavours, such as the Ministry of Education's Educational Welfare Project. However, the municipal elections of 1978, which brought to power a new mayor, representing the political opposition, changed this situation radically. The atmosphere at the Local Council was one of hostility. The project's executive committee was disbanded, and we became, in a way, non-persons vis-a-vis the Local Council. The Institute for Education and Community Development entered into protracted negotiations with the mayor and the Local Council, which continued for over two years, with increasing degrees of hostility. Nonetheless, throughout this period, work proceeded, financial obligations undertaken by the prior administration were honoured, para-professional counsellors trained by the project were hired, and work on the neighbourhood centre in the Eli Cohen neighbourhood proceeded. Although our relationship with the political establishment became attenuated and there no longer was a body of local people officially responsible for planning and sharing responsibility for the project with us, we continued to consult and work together with the professionals as the need arose, and found them on the whole as cordial as ever. Our relations with the Educational Welfare Project and through it, the Ministry of Education's inspectorate, flourished as our joint activities began to bear fruit. The project was officially represented on the steering committee of the Educational Welfare Project, and in effect was considered an educational area in its own right. It was the Educational Welfare Project which saved the day when we found ourselves in August 1979, on the eve of the new school-year, still without an agreement with the Local Council. An interim agreement for one year (1979-1980) was concluded and signed by the mayor, according to which the project would be responsible to the steering committee of the Educational Welfare Project (on which Local Council representatives, the directors of relevant municipal departments, etc. share power with representatives of the Ministry of Education inspectorate);

the Local Council's financial allocation to the project would consist of our share of the Educational Welfare Project's budget, rental and upkeep of the two neighbourhood centres which were to be opened, office space and telephone. However, these ad-hoc arrangements were hardly adequate in the long run. As the project approached the end of its three-year grant from the Foundation, the question of continuity was foremost in our minds. How could we approach the Board of Trustees for funding of another three years of activity, without the assurance of cooperation from the local authorities and a reasonable indication that they would, indeed, be prepared ultimately to take over and continue the programs developed in the project? The mayor made it clear that unless he was to be in full control and receive funding directly from the Bernard van Leer Foundation, he was not ready to agree to continuation of the project. Our negotiating stance was improved somewhat in May 1980, when the Labour Alignment concluded a coalition agreement with the N.R.P. and re-joined the Local Council executive. However, what finally saved the day was the fact that members of the mayor's own political party sitting on the Local Council Executive had come to the conclusion that the project was of importance to the community and deserving of support. In July 1980, the Local Council Executive decided to continue cooperation with the Institute for Education and Community Development in the development of the joint Education and Community Project in Ofakim. The project was to be run by an independent association, a third of whose members would be representatives of the Local Council, a third, members of the Institute, and a third, representatives of the Community Centre (itself an independent association). The establishment of an independent association would facilitate the employment of project staff, an issue which had become more and more problematic since the Municipality was forced to cut back staff and prevented from hiring new people, as part of an overall policy applying to all government agencies .

Towards the end of 1980, the Board of Trustees of the Bernard van Leer Foundation approved the grant proposal which had been submitted for a second phase of project activities, to begin in January 1981.

The Phase II Project Proposal also set forth our intentions to disseminate our experience beyond the confines of Ofakim, in the form of a satellite program in the neighbouring moshav (small-holders cooperative village) communities, where we planned to adapt community-education programs developed in Ofakim to a demographically similar, yet structurally very different rural setting. It was our belief that careful monitoring, evaluation and comparison of results achieve in these different settings would contribute considerably towards the development of models suitable for dissemination to other social settings, and towards the development of appropriate conceptual formulations generalized from the cumulative experience of integrated and comprehensive community education project.

F. Project Operations - Phase II 1981-1983

1. Neighbourhood Family Centres

1980-1981

From the beginning of the project, we viewed the establishment of community centres at the local level, serving as meeting-places and physical base of operations, as a pre-condition for the successful development of neighbourhood-based project activities and as the crucial link in realizing the central aims of the project - the creation of an educational ecology for the child and a framework in which people could participate actively in their own and their children's education and acquire experience transferable to other areas of community life.

The central aim informing all activities at the centres was viewed as the fostering of self-functioning and autonomy - both at the level of the individual, child or adult, and at that of the community. We set the following objectives for centre-based activities:

1. providing parents with guidance and helping them to enhance their knowledge and skills so as to enable them to function more effectively as parents and teachers, by means of discussion and activity groups and active involvement in the running of centre activities.

2. providing stimulation and enrichment for infants, toddlers and pre-school children by means of a variety of structured and unstructured play and creative activities;

3. encouraging neighbourhood women to work together to improve the quality of family and neighbourhood life by meeting together to discuss common problems and search for effective solutions;

4. serving as social centre for neighbourhood women and reducing the social and psychological isolation common to many housewives and young mothers.

By the end of Phase I of project operations, two Neighbourhood Family Centres were in operation, each staffed by a team of para-professionals- one in the Eli Cohen and the other in the Ben-Gurion neighbourhood. The centres operated 5 days a week (Sunday through Wednesday, both mornings and afternoons; on Thursdays, mornings were reserved for in-service training, while children's afternoon activities continued as usual).

Whereas in 1979-1980 our main concern had been with simply getting the centres organized and functioning and attracting the community to their activities, we now turned over attention to the development of a structured, though flexible, program of community education activities in which neighbourhood residents, adults and children, would be actively involved.

<u>The afternoon activity program for children</u>

The centres were open to the neighbourhood children, aged 3 to 8,every afternoon. From age 3, the child could come to the centre unattended by a parent, though parents were encouraged to come and participate.

The educational philosophy and approach on which the program was based, encouraged self-initiated activity on the part of the child, independent problem solving, cooperation, independance and responsibility. This approach was very much in line with the project's overall aim of fostering self-functioning and autonomy in the individual and the community.

The para-professional counsellors had some difficulty in adapting themselves to a role which called on them to be involved, but not interfering. We devoted a great deal of attention to training them in this 'new' approach, making use of training materials from the Oranim Kibbutz Teacher Training Seminary, as well as our own video equipment, which we used in training session. The counsellors were able to view themselves in interaction with the children, and analyze their own shortcomings. Training sessions were also devoted to problems of 'special' children - retarded, hyperkinetic, etc. who were able to find their place and feel wanted at the centres.

The centres provided a wide range of play and enrichment activities, and children were encouraged to move freely from one activity of their choice to another. Activity areas included building blocks and vehicles, a make-believe play area, sand and water, carpenting, creative play (painting, collage, clay, paste, etc.); a reading corner; a listening corner equipped with tape and ear-phones; games, puzzles, and creative toys; puppets, etc. A short period at the end of each play session was given over to organized group activities: group games, pantomime, songs and rhymes, story-telling, and impromptu theatrical performances. Whereas kindergartens in Ofakim tend to function as scaled-down classrooms, with a structured and very much teacher-directed curriculum, our centres were child-centred, non-directive, and non-achievement-orientated. The mixed age group in the centres - ranging from toddlers to 1st and 2nd graders - posed no problem: children gravitated naturally toward those activities of interest to them, and older children often played with and helped younger ones.

Since so far, we had had but limited success in involving parents in the children's activities, we decided to develop a special program of structured enrichment activities in which parents and children would jointly participate, and in which parents would indirectly learn how to play with their children.

Two types of activities were planned: didactic games (both bought and home-made) and creative story-telling, using a variety of techniques - magic lantern, puppets, pantomime, flannel and magnetic boards, etc. - with parent and child actively involved. This program, which we called 'MASLUL', began functioning in both centres in the beginning of 1981, on Tuesday afternoons (when shops and offices are closed). On the afternoon of the 'MASLUL' program, only children attended by parents were admitted to the centre - and the children made a point of encouraging their parents to attend. The program was on the whole successful, especially in the Eli Cohen centre, where the same group of mothers attended regularly. For many of these mothers, this proved to be their first experience of play, as an activity in which adults legitimately take part.

The morning activity program for mothers

The morning activity at the centres were aimed primarily at the young mothers of infants and toddlers in the neighbourhoods, who did not work outside the home. At one level, we viewed these activities as a social outlet for the women, and as a means towards fostering social cohesion in the neighbourhood community. At another level, each of the group activities involved acquisition of skills and knowledge in those areas central to their lives - child-rearing, family-life and home-making. We hoped that participation in the various workshops and discussion circles would increase the women's self-confidence, improve their self-image, and help them to cope more effectively with the problem of daily life, as well as leading to their more active involvement in the community.

The major and most successful activity was the weekly course for mothers of infants and toddlers, 'You and Your Child'. 13 mothers in the Eli Cohen Centre and 10 in the Ben-Gurion Centre met weekly over an eight months period; all the women who had signed up for the course continued until the end, with almost no absences. The course dealt with various aspects of child development and education.

A high degree of group cohesion was reached, and in each of the centres, these women became the central group from whose ranks the centre's committees were organized, which were responsible for the organization of holiday celebration at the centres, the used-clothing exchange at the Eli Cohen centre, etc. At the end of the year, each woman received a certificate. (Some of these mothers later went on to become counsellors in the program). Good use was made by the women of the lending-library at the centre, and it became customary to exchange books at the end of each session. For most of these women this was their first contact with literature on child-rearing and related topics.

An attempt was made to organize a similar group in the evenings for working mothers, but this proved to be unsuccessful. Several other activity groups were organized in each of the centres throughout the year, usually of three months duration. A minimal fee was paid by the women participating in each group, and they also paid the cost of all materials used. In the Eli Cohen Centre, some 6 mothers participated in a games workshop which ran for 10 sessions. The participants discussed the role of play in general and games in particular, and learnt to play with a variety of puzzles and board games in sequenced order of complexity. A lending library of games permitted them to borrow games for use with their own children.

Another highly successful effort were the toy-making workshops, where the women learnt to make toys from scrap or inexpensive materials. While making the toys, the counsellors explained the toys' function in furthering the child's development: each toy was chosen according to its appropriateness for use at a certain developmental stage, and with a clearly defined purpose in mind.

After running three workshops in toy-making
the Ben-Gurion centre for ultra-orthodox women who normally refused to mingle with the community, at their request), we concluded that these workshops were an ideal way of introducing basic concepts of child development and the role of play, provided that the course was carefully structed, with each toy that was prepared serving as a proto-type and with the toys presented in developmental-stage sequence.

The experience garnered from these first attempts provided the basis for the following year's workshops, which were carefully planned and prepared.

At the Eli Cohen centre, a sewing circle was organized in which women learnt to sew simple children's clothes, mainly using discarded clothes of their own which they cut down. For most of these women this was their first experience in copying and cutting out a pattern and using a sewing-machine.

These group meetings were as much a social activity as a learning experience; women took turns bringing refreshments, and the chat over coffee and cake were at least as important to them as the actual purpose of the workshop. We made a point of encouraging them to spend part of the morning playing with their children and utilizing the wealth of equipment available at the centre. Mothers tended to drop by informally on other days for a chat or a cup of tea. At the Eli Cohen centre, many women also made use of the coin-operated washing machines available, and the centre began to develop into a neighbourhood gathering place.

Several attempts to organize general meetings of the mothers of the children participating in the afternoon activities were disappointing both as regards the number of mothers attending, and the outcome of these meetings. The women tended to be passive - and we had difficulty getting across our message that the centres were not a service provided for them but a community facility whose success depended on the degree to which they became actively involved in its running. The attempt to activate mothers' committees was also rather disappointing. In both centres, two successful holiday celebrations were organized for mothers and children, with the committees playing an active role: however, women were reluctant to assume responsibility over an extended period of time, and all initiative came from the counsellors and not the mothers themselves.

Perhaps this should not have surprised us: on the whole, the women with initiative and ambition in the neighbourhoods were also those who made a concerted effort to go out to work. (Despite much talk of unemployment, work for women, especially in the low-paid textile industries, seemed to be available).

Summarizing and evaluating the year's achievements, our staff concluded that a concerted effort needed to be made to involve parents more actively in the neighbourhood centre program. Many proposals were tabled, among them, the organization of play groups run by mothers on a rota, a training program for mothers, in which they would learn how to work with children at the centre, and more intensive outreach work.

1981-1982

At the beginning of the 1981-1982 school-year we opened our third Neighbourhood Family Centre in the Remet neighbourhood - an area where we had been working for some time with mothers and toddlers in the EMRA program, and where the lack of a physical base for activities had been felt acutely. The new Remet centre was housed in a small flat (the only available facility) and financed by Project Renewal. The plan, which had been approved by the steering committee of Project Renewal, called for utilization of the centre during afternoon and evening hours as an activity centre for teenage girls. This meant that unlike the other neighbourhood centres, no play facilities existed for children in the afternoons - despite the fact that this neighbourhood had a large population of pre-school children. We had of course been aware of this need, and had submitted a separate proposal which called for utilization of one of the kindergartens in the area as an activity-centre for children in the afternoons. Approval of this proposal was delayed until the spring of 1982, and the plan only went into effect in the autumn of 1983.

Our main objectives for the 1981-1982 activity year were:

1. to find effective ways of expanding and deepening community involvement in the neighbourhood centre program and of encouraging participants in the program to assume increasing responsibility for planning and running activities;
2. to institutionalize program contents, by developing more clearly defined and structured activity programs consistent with the underlying philosophy and aims of the project;
3. to wean the para-professional staff of the centres of their dependence on professional guidance, making them ultimately fully responsible for all aspects of the neighbourhood-centre based program.

This demanded increased professionalization on their part, which in turn called for clearer role definition, differentiation and specialization.

The para-professional counsellors, with one exception, worked either in the morning or the afternoon program, and had been meeting for in-service-training sessions as separate teams with their supervisor-trainers. The key policy decision taken at the beginning of the 1981-1982 activity year was that all of the programs would be run by the para-professional staff; while they would be assured of maximum support, guidance and training, they, rather than the professionals, would be the ones working directly with the client population. This policy paid off beyond our most optimistic expectations: once they overcame their initial fears and began to acquire self-confidence, they were able to give expression to their innate creativity, which, combined with increasing knowledge and skill acquired through the continuous training process, resulted in a number of innovative activity programs.

At tri-monthly workshop sessions, the counsellors working in the various project programs met together as neighbourhhod teams, to discuss problems specific to each neighbourhood and its population which had come to light in the course of their work, and to establish guidelines for future activities.

Through this process we were able to modify and change operational objectives and to bring the neighbourhood-centre program into closer alignment with the needs and desires of the client population. No less important, the para-professional staff became accustomed to the process of identifying needs and problems, defining objectives, and planning systematically. At the first of these sessions, held in October 1981, the following guidelines were established:

1. more emphasis should be placed on activities responding to the womens' own needs: a woman is not only a mother, but an individual in her own right;
2. the centre should be a place where the women feel at ease, not just a place where they come to learn something;
3. wherever possible, the neighbourhood women should themselves run activities, and share their knowledge with others (i.e., in cooking, handicrafts, etc.).

At the next session, in March 1982, the neighbourhood centre teams were able to report on increasing social cohesion among the women coming to the centre, as a result of the changed emphasis: each centre had developed a multi-faceted program of activities, providing for different interests and needs. Focus now shifted to new challenges:

1. the need to get away from the service image which tended to cling to the centres and to foster a sense of real belonging and responsibility among the women, - willingness to contribute - as well as to receive;
2. the problem of sustainability: women would become enthusiastic about something, but after a short time this petered out, especially if the activity in which they were involved put demands on them. Similarly, many women were unaccustomed to planning ahead, and reluctant to commit themselves to regular attendence at a structured group activity.
3. The low frustration threshold of our client population: the young mothers, especially in the Remet and Eli Cohen neighbourhoods, tended to be self-indulgent and immature, and unwilling to devote effort to anything without an immediate pay-off - including investment of time and energy in learning to care for their children more effectively.

These group discussions also served to defuse some of the frustrations faced by the counsellors who put themselves on the line on a daily basis in their contract with the women in the neighbourhoods. Their role called for a great deal of ego-strength; every less-than-successful activity, every drop in participation, challenged their faith in their own ability. Almost without exception, they faced this challenge with surprising maturity.

Morning activity program for mothers and toddlers

Activities in the three neighbourhood centres reflected the shift of responsibility for planning and implementation to the local staff and the client population itself. The program itself reflected the concerted effort which was being made to 'keep our ears to the ground' and to respond to the real needs and wishes of the women who were participating in centre activities.

At the Eli Cohen centre, the high-light of the year's activities was the play group organized during the 4-week period between the Purim and Passover festivals, when it is usually almost impossible to conduct regular activities, since all the house-wives are completely taken up with spring cleaning and preparations for the holiday. We proposed organizing a play group which would meet every morning, with each mother participating in the running of the group. The obvious advantage of having their mornings free attracted the mothers, and in March, the play group was organized. The mothers brought their 1-2½ year old toddlers to the centre and worked there themselves on a rota basis. After the holidays, the mothers decided to continue the play group on a twice-weekly basis.

The play group was successful in several ways. The mothers would usually visit for a while in the centre before they left their children, and attended the bi-weekly evening meeting for organizational purposes.

They undertook responsibility for buying food and collecting money from the mothers. The mothers noted the improvement in their children's language development and social behaviour. Nine mothers and eleven children participated in the program.

Whereas the Eli Cohen neighbourhood had undergone demographic changes which negatively affected the functioning of the neighbourhood centre (out-migration of young couples, transients, and a high proportion of middle-aged and aged residents), the reverse process was taking place in the Ben-Gurion neighbourhood. Many young couples had recently moved into the new housing developments and condominium flats in the neighbourhood. The young women of the neighbourhood were upwardly mobile, more highly motivated towards self-improvement, and more aware of the needs of their children. Our main problem lay in the fact that the neighbourhood centre was located at the outskirts of the neighbourhood, thus making it more difficult for mothers of small children to reach the centre, as well as posing a challenge to the centre staff in their out-reach work. We thus assigned a part-time worker to the task of community out-reach. In addition to the young mothers from the Ben-Gurion neighbourhood, the centre also attracted a number of older women from the Giboreh Yisrael area which bordered on the centre in the other direction. As a result of on-going community work, more and more women were attracted to activities at the centre. The team of counsellors responsible for morning activities, Mazal and Margo, were both especially talented and complemented each other: Mazal developed excellent rapport with the mothers; since she was slightly older than most of the women frequenting the centre, she was regarded as being a more experienced mother, and often approached for advice on personal and family problems. By nature both sensitive and democratic, she was especially successful in leading group discussions. Margo, who had previously worked in the EMRA program, had experience of working with young children, and was also excellent in handicrafts.

In addition, she was creative and innovative, and a natural pedagogue despite her limited (8 years) formal education. Margo not only organized the mothers' and toddlers' group and the toy-making groups which met regularly throughout the year, she also planned the curriculum content of these activities and evolved an effective methodology. Margo's ebullience and Mazal's supportive warmth lent a special quality to activities in the Ben-Gurion centre, and neighbourhood women fequently dropped in, even if not participating in the mornings activities.

A regular activity program, established at the beginning of the year, continued without mishap. This was the only centre in which the discussion group continued with regular attendence throughout the year, thus illustrating the house-mother's real capacity for maintaining interest in an activity offering less immediate feedback or reward. In fairness to the staffs of the other centres, it should however be pointed out once more that the client population in this neighbourhood was undoubtedly more highly motivated - or perhaps, more middle-class - than that in the other neighbourhoods. Activities took place 4 mornings weekly. These activities consisted of:

1. *A discussion group, which began with discussions of behaviour management, moved on to the broader area of child-parent relations (using Dryker's 'Children the Challenge' as a text) and from these to family relations;*
2. *a cooking and baking group, led by a mother from the neighbourhood with training in the field;*
3. *a mothers' and toddlers' group;*
4. *a toy-making group.*

The Remet Neighbourhood Centre had opened in September 1981, in a small neighbourhood flat. Although Project Renewal had officially approved the plan for the new centre, and assumed financial responsibility for equipment, salaries and operating expenses, no funds were made available until January 1982 (most of the promised furniture and equipment was finally obtained during the summer of 1982).

As soon as the flat became available, the project decided to begin operations, with a minimal investment of resources.

Furnishings and equipment consisted of what could be spared from the other centres; our investment in salaries and other expenses was eventually paid back almost a year later, in October 1932. Available was a minimum amount of books and toys, and a minimal amount of kitchen equipment. In spite of these drawbacks women started to come almost immediately. We began by organizing various activity groups which had been successful at the other centres: toy-making, sewing, discussion group on child-rearing problems, etc. The response to all the activity groups was similar. The mothers enjoyed the first few sessions, eventually became disinterested, and the attendance decreased. There were several possible explanations for this pattern:

1. The women themselves had never been involved in any long-term activities which required commitment. At the first sign of disappointment, or lack of general participation, they stopped coming;
2. There was a gap between what they said they wanted to do and the activities which were going on at the centre;
3. They didn't identify themselves with the centre, and if the activity did not please them then they stopped coming. The role of the centre, in their eyes, was to provide them with services.

In March a play-group was launched, and succeeded, more than any other activity, in involving the mothers and helping them to feel that the centre was a vital part of their community. The play-group was a cooperative enterprise and the mothers were involved in collecting money, buying food, and working in the play group on a rota basis. The play-group operated three days a week until the end of the school-year.

As already mentioned, the Remet Neighbourhood Centre was sponsored by Project Renewal; since financing coming from government must be channeled through statutory agencies, the centre came under the auspices of the Ministry of Welfare, with the local Department of Welfare officially responsible. This was our first direct experience of government bureaucracy and its hampering (and dampening) effect leading us to appreciate the degrees of freedom and flexibility which we enjoyed as an independent project in our other enterprises.

The afternoon activity program for children

Afternoon activities at the Eli Cohen and Ben-Gurion neighbourhood centres continued in 1981-1982 along the lines established during the prior year. Sasona Barzilai, who assumed responsibility for the training and guiding of the work of the centres' para-professional staff, was a graduate of the Oranim Kibbutz Teachers' Training Seminary and brought to her task many years of experience as a kindergarten teacher. Under her supervision, the children's afternoon activity program became more clearly defined, both conceptually and operationally.

The children's program in the neighbourhood centres was based on the principle of free-flowing, self-initiated and self-directed activity, with a wide variety of activities available from which the child is able to chose. Central to this approach is the belief that if the child is permitted to chose what he wants to do, and for how long, he learns to be responsible for his own decisions and choices. Non-directive, self-initiated activity enables the child to learn through experimentation and discovery. The counsellor's role is to encourage the child to solve problems independently, to the best of his abilities, in his own way. Her involvement with the child takes the form of support and interest in what he is doing, through sympathetic observation or questions; she avoids interference in the child's activity, and does not tell him what to do or how to do it.

In this way the child learns to depend on himself, to become aware of his own skills and limitations and to overcome difficulties by himself. Since the child is under no pressure to compete with others or to achieve, and free to spend as much time as he wants at a given task, he learns not to be discouraged if he does not succeed in doing something at first. The activity itself, the process, is valued - not the product or outcome. Children enjoy coming to the centre because they are free to express themselves in their own way - because it is fun. A child may come as often as he likes; during the hours the centre is open, he may come and go as he choses. Freedom does not however imply anarchy; the centre is governed by well-defined rules of behaviour which are known to all the children, and which they are expected to observe. On the whole, they quickly adapt themselves to both freedom and its boundaries. Freedom also carries with it responsibilities; the children share in the tasks of keeping the centre clean and orderly, and at the end of each afternoon's activities, the counsellors and the children put away equipment and clean up after themselves.

Careful planning and organization underly the unstructured environment; there is nothing haphazard about the arrangement of the 15 odd activity areas. All equipment had been carefully chosen; the counsellors are instructed in the rationale of each activity and the educational principles underlying it, and have themselves tried out all the activities, from finger-painting and block-building to playing didactic games and reading the childrens' book.

1982-1983

The morning activity program for mothers and toddlers

On the basis of the discussions devoted to summarizing activities during 1981-1982, the staff of the neighbourhood centre program defined a number of objectives for the coming (1982-1983) activity year:

1. to engage in systematic community out-reach, in order to extend the periphery of families involved in centre activities, and to up-date our information on the neighbourhoods' inhabitants, their needs and their wishes;
2. to develop a structured activity program for toddlers who come to the centre with their mothers (to replace what had in essence been a child-minding service);
3. to encourage neighbourhood women to play an active role in running the centre programs.

These objectives informed the activity plan draw-up by the staff of each of the centres at the beginning of the year. Community out-reach is an integral aspect of the work of the counsellors staffing the centres: in each of the three neighbourhoods (Eli Cohen, Ben-Gurion, Remet) extensive outreach work preceded the initiation of the year's program.

Activities followed the pattern of prior years, with some changes of emphasis. The centres more and more assumed the character of a support-structure for neighbourhood women. Discussion groups dealt with family life, rather than child-raising per se; women often just dropped by to drink coffee or borrow a book. The fact that women could come to activities with their toddlers, whom one of the staff would engage in activities while the mothers participated in the group activity, provided them with a welcome break from household tasks and child-care.

At the Remet centre, the play-group re-organized itself and functioned throughout the year for two mornings a week. 12 mothers and their toddlers took part.

Unlike in other activities, the mothers played a crucial role, collecting fees, buying provisions and organizing the mothers' rota.

The afternoon activity program for children

Community out-reach work preceded the re-opening of the afternoon activity program for children in the Eli Cohen and Ben-Gurion centres. An average of 30-40 children, ranging in age from nursery-school to 2nd grade, came to the centres daily; one afternoon a week, the centres were opened to older children, up to the 5th grade. Each centre was staffed by a team of 2 counsellors who had been specially trained for this job. The free-flowing activity program was by now well defined and institutionalized, thus enabling us to introduce staff changes with relative ease.

2. *THE EARLY CHILDHOOD RESOURCE CENTRE*

1980-1981

The Early Childhood Resource Centre was opened in one section of the Ben-Gurion Neighbourhood Centre in December 1980. The Centre had evolved out of the workshops in parent-involvement and the pilot projects which we had organized in the kindergartens during Phase I. The staff of the centre, Sasona Barzilai, an experienced kindergarten teacher from one of the neighbouring kibbutzim, and one of the project's para-professional staff, devoted most of their efforts during the first months to the development and organization of resource materials. Once a week, the centre was open to kindergarten and nursery school teachers who were able to avail themselves of the workshop facilities in the centre and the guidance of the centre's staff both in the preparation of various teaching materials and games and in planning programs with parents. The centre was also available to the kindergarten teachers for their in-service training sessions and for workshops with parents. Cordial relations were established with the Ministry of Education kindergarten inspectors, and under their auspices a number of special workshops were organized. In addition to the Ofakim kindergarten teachers, those from the Merchavim moshav area also began to frequent and utilize the centre.

The almost immediate success of the centre came almost as a surprise to us - it answered a real and perceived need, since the kindergarten teachers had up to that point had no place to meet and little systematic guidance, not to speak of very limited resources.

Sasona Barzilai's professional experience and talents as a teacher trainer were undoubtedly the key factor in the centre's rapid and successful development. In terms of the project's goals of enhancing parent involvement in education, we now had a unique opportunity indirectly, via the kindergarten teacher, to influence this involvement effectively, with the blessing of the Ministry of Education.

1981-1982

During 1981-1982, the Early Childhood Resource Centre became the meeting-place for all the kindergarten teachers in the area. All training sessions were held in the centre; in addition, at the Resource Centre they were able to meet their colleagues informally, receive pedagogical advice, prepare teaching aids and didactic games, and get assistance in planning activities with parents. A wide range of educational resources were available at the centre:

1. Samples of some 50 home-made didactic games for ages 2-7, with materials, facilities and instructions for their construction available at the centre. The games were catalogued and coded according to content and purpose: development of mathematical concepts, matching, sensory development, reading readiness, etc. Kindergarten teachers made games for use in the kindergarten or samples for workshops with parents, paying only for the cost of materials.
2. Lending library of books on education, psychology, and various topics related to the kindergarten curriculum. Disappointingly, few of the kindergarten teachers took advantage of this facility.
3. Audio-visual aids: slides and video-tapes on various topics, such as the organization of a junk-play ground, rhyming games, building blocks, etc.
4. Model displays on various subjects forming part of the kindergarten curriculum such as holidays, the seasons of the year, reading readiness, etc.

One corner of the centre was given over to this purpose. The corner was prepared by an experienced local kindergarten teacher who supervised and guided the work of the less experienced teachers, and was intended to serve as a model for similar displays which the teachers were expected to prepare in their own kindergartens.

5. *Mimeographed activity pages: the kindergarten teachers had been in the habit of preparing their own work-pages for use in the kindergarten, or for the children to take home and work on with their parents; in the past we had assisted them in mimeographing this material. Often these pages were poorly conceived and poorly executed. We prepared a wide selection of activity and work-pages, carefully selected from a variety of sources, and classified according to the type of activity or skill they were meant to reinforce. In return for an equivilant quantity of blank paper, the teachers received as many copies of whatever pages they selected for use in their classes.*

During this year, we continued the library project which we had initiated two years earlier. Every kindergarten participating raised funds from the parents to buy some 15-20 books, which were matched by another 20 books supplied by the project and served as a mini-lending library utilized by the children in the kindergarten, who exchanged books (which they took home) weekly. Some 17 kindergartens participated in this activity during 1981-1982.

At the end of the school-year, we began to prepare a new addition to the resources provided by the centre - a lending-library of mounted reproductions of paintings to be displayed in the kindergartens. In preparation for the introduction of this new element of aesthetic education into the kindergartens, the teachers were taken on a guided tour of the Israel Museum in Jerusalem. For many of them, this was a first-time experience.

The Early Childhood Resource Centre was a unique and innovative contribution to the educational life of the town and its surroundings. Israeli kindergartens are not linked to primary schools and kindergarten teachers usually work in isolation from each other, with the kindergarten inspector alone acting as a link between them; each kindergarten teacher fends for herself as best she can in preparing her own teaching aids. The Ofakim Early Childhood Resource Centre not only made a wide selection of resource materials conveniently available to these teachers and served as an effective catalyst for the development of more effective modes of parent-teacher interaction, but also helped to mitigate the pro-

As the centre's reputation grew, special education teachers and 1st and 2nd grade teachers from the primary schools also began to utilize the available facilities.

1982-1983

The Early Childhood Resource Centre had by now become a well-established and important component of early childhood education in Ofakim and the Merchavim region. The centre's workshop facilities are open twice weekly in the afternoons, and were well-utilized by the kindergarten teachers and some parents. A new development was the weekly course on kindergarten education for kindergarten teachers' aides which was taught by Sasona Barzilai within the framework of the TEHILA adult education program of the Ministry of Education.

In addition to Sasona Barzilai, the centre was staffed by a veteran Ofakim Kindergarten teacher and a crafts teacher, each employed in this capacity one day per week by the Ministry of Education's Educational Betterment Program.

3. Parent Education and Play Corners in the Clinics

Running the play-corners and parent education program in the clinic waiting rooms was both the most challenging and the most frustrating of the various activities in which the project's para-professional staff engaged. On one hand, the clinic waiting rooms are an area potentially reached by all Ofakim pre-school children, their parents or caregivers, and as such an invaluable setting for disseminating information on good parenting practices, modelling desirable kinds of adult-child interaction, and interesting parents in various project programs. On the other hand, contact with parents is brief and random and often takes place under less than optimal conditions of overcrowding, discomfort, tension and irritation. Whereas this program had been singularly effective in reducing children's tension and relieving their boredom by providing toys, books and play-facilities, interaction with parents had not come up to our expectations. This led to a re-definition of priorities and objectives and a decision to concentrate all our efforts on developing effective means of working with parents in this difficult situation. Called for was first of all the changing of the staff's self-image and their image in the eyes of the client population from 'toy-lady' to counsellor, reorganizing the physical setting so that toys would be made available to the child only via the parent, and most important of all, initiating an intensive staff training program. This took the form of both individual guidance and supervision and group in-service training sessions. Effective use was made of video for this purpose, both to analyze and correct the para-professional counsellors' activities and to model appropriate interactions and behaviours.

The increasing emphasis on parent education and parent involvement led us to stress the counsellors' role in stimulating parent interest, demonstrating play activities, modelling appropriate child-adult interaction, and transmitting information.

This also demanded furthering their knowledge of child-development and child-rearing topics - especially those most likely to arise in discussion with parents - and a 'play-repertoire' was developed together with the staff, consisting of a variety of home-made and bought toys, puzzles, books, games and play-materials; in training sessions the purpose, use and presentation of each item was discussed. The counsellors also familiarized themselves with the reading material which we had begun to make available for parents (i.e., the Open University's 'First Year of Life' series). We stressed the importance of demonstration materials - especially of the home-made variety, which parents could also be encouraged to make and use (i.e. crib toys, mobiles, hand-puppets, home-made books, matching and sorting games, etc.), and each counsellor prepared a selection of the above for use in her play-corner. Recording and reporting procedures were improved; and counsellors wrote up daily logs in which they reported the days events: what activities they had initiated, what parents they established contact with and for what purpose, etc. By the end of the year there was marked improvement in the level of functioning of the play-corners: both goals and the means for their implementation had become more clearly defined, a rich selection of educational materials had been assembled and prepared, and the counsellors had acquired a much clearer concept of their role. Nonetheless, it was felt that we still fell short of attaining our goal of parent stimulation and involvement. It had become clear that the personality and personal qualifications of the counsellors were perhaps <u>the</u> key to success, given the difficult and challenging setting of the clinic waiting rooms, where contacts with parents was brief and the atmosphere often tense and distracting. We concluded that the counsellors filling this role needed to be strong and mature personalities, able to approach parents with confidence and break down barriers. No less, they needed to be able to function independently in complex and ambiguous situations, which often called for a high measure of both tact and firmness. Two of the four counsellors working in the program hardly filled this bill, and at the end of the year, despite our heavy investment in in-service training, we concluded that there was no alternative to terminating their employment.

Throughout the year, we maintained excellent working relations with the medical staff of the clinics. A number of meetings were held in which a variety of joint activities were planned, such as preparing written handouts on various preventive health issues. However, the clinics were subject to constant staff turnover (and often lack of staff) and little came of these plans. Nonetheless, the pediatricians found time to meet periodically with the project's para-professional staff in in-service training sessions, in which various health issues, such as viral illnesses, drug-abuse, burns, etc. were discussed.

Our repeated attempts to continue the 'Preparation for Childbirth and Parenthood' classes, which we had run jointly with the Ministry of Health's 'Well-Baby' clinic nurses, were unsuccessful. Apparently we had trespassed into an area which was considered the domain of the Ministry of Health, and it was made fairly clear that cooperation with us in this area was not going to be encouraged. Attempts made by the nurses to organize classes on their own were not successful either.

By the end of the year, negotiations with the Association for the Advancement of Health Services in the Negev (a joint project of the Ministry of Health, the Histadrut Health Fund, and the Medical School of the University of the Negev, in cooperation with the JDC) were successfully concluded and the Association undertook to finance the staffing of one of the four play-corners which we were operating, as of October 1981.

1981-1982

In defining objectives for the coming year, we emphasized:

1. furthering the independent functioning of the counsellors;
2. increasing the variety of educational resources and facilities available to parents:
3. giving priority to parent-counselling, whenever possible on an on-going basis;
4. striving to affect parents' attitudes and behaviour in regard to a number of important issues such as toilet-training, punishment, feeding, etc.

A number of new features were introduced. Each play-corner displayed a variety of developmental-stage orientated educational toys; parents were able to make any of these toys while waiting, under the counsellors' instruction, paying only for the cost of the materials (all of which were available in the play-corner). The counsellor utilized these toy-making sessions to discuss the purpose of each toy, the importance of play in the child's development, and any other issue which the parents raised. We expanded the library of books on parenting, child-development, pregnancy and related issues. In response to repeated requests to borrow the books to read at home, we began lending books for a 1-2 week period. Despite the fact that we demanded no deposit, there were no incidents of books borrowed and not returned. A variety of leaflets and hand outs were also made available: in addition to our own materials, we received a variety of health-education pamphlets from Kupat Holim for distribution: exposure to sun, accidnet prevention etc. At regular intervals, the medical staff of the clinic and the Kupat Holim health educator who visited Ofakim once a week lectured to all of the project staff on various preventive health topics. We also began to pay more attention to the needs of the older children who came to the clinics, and provided suitable games and activities for them.

These intensive efforts to stimulate parent interest and involvement in a variety of ways: by offering toys suited to the child and encouraging the parents to play with their children while waiting, by passing around reading materials, offering instructions in toy-making, and being ever-ready to listen to problems and to help if possible, began to produce tangible results.

Parents began to perceive the counsellors as resource-people to whom they could turn for advice and guidance with the problems they encountered in raising their children: discipline, bed-wetting, fears, sibling -rivalry, and a variety of developmental problems. Often they would turn to the counsellors for advice on more intimate matters such as birth-control and marital relations.

On occasion, women came to the clinic especially to talk to the counsellor; in many cases they found it easier to discuss a family problem with the para-professional counsellor than with the professional clinic staff. When necessary, the counsellors acted as go-between, referring the women to the relevant professionals for help. In other instances, they would suggest appropriate reading-material.

In most cases, their own training, knowledge and common-sense sufficed, with the empathy they were able to establish playing a crucial role. From time to time, the nurses and doctors referred parents to the counsellor for guidance.

The play-and guidance corners in the clinics also served as a show-window for the project as a whole: the counsellors in the clinics described the project's other programs to the parents, encouraged them to become involved in activities in the neighbourhood centres and referred new mothers to the EMRA program. The fact that all of the town's children and parents come into contact with the clinic a number of times during the year, served to assure that our key message of the importance of parent's active concern and involvement with their children's development and education reached a mixmum number of people. The clinic play and guidance corners played an important role in attracting potential participants to the projects' other programs, as well as providing easily accessible guidance and advice on a variety of common problems facing parents. No less important, the play-corners served to improve the quality of life in the community by reducing some of the friction and tension attendant to waiting one's turn at the clinic.

1982-1983

Activities at the three play and parent guidance corners in the pediatric clinics had by now become well-defined and institutionalized. Emphasis was placed on parent-guidance. Each corner maintained a small library of books on child-rearing, etc. which could be borrowed on payment of a small deposit; parents engaged in toy-making under the direction of the counsellor and a wide variety of toys, games, puzzles, etc. were available to children of all ages while waiting.

The counsellors had become adept at engaging parents in conversation on child-rearing issues, and were often turned to for advice.

Repeated efforts to develop a preventive health education program did not bear fruit - since this could only be accomplished together with the medical staff, who had not been able to find the necessary time.

The Association for the Advancement of Health and Welfare Services in the Negev continued to finance the running of one of the three corners, and began to discuss the possibility of expanding the program to other localities.

1982-1983

Although this program was particularly successful in its operation at the beginning of the year, it fared badly as the year proceeded. A prolonged physicians' strike paralyzed activities during the last months of the activity year. The decision of the steering committee of Project Renewal not to support continuation of the program* led to the decision to close down operations in two of the three clinics at the end of the school-year. This meant that as of September 1983, only one clinic play and parent guidance corner, in the Kupat Holim 'B' clinic, continued to function, funded by the Association for the Advancement of Health and Welfare in the Negev.

4. The EMRA Home-Intervention Program

1980-1981

The basic structure of the program had been developed during Phase I of the project. With the beginning of Phase II operations, a systematic effort began to align the program with the specific project objectives for this stage.

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* The reference is to support requested from Project Renewal for all of the project programs in 1983-1984. Since Bernard van Leer Foundation support was scheduled to continue only until the end of 1983, we had to negotiate at the beginning of 1983 for support the following year until April 1984, the Israeli fiscal year.

In terms of the EMRA program, this meant expansion of the program - geographically, to new neighbourhoods and numerically, developing an organizational structure and program contents along lines permitting the para-professional team to function more independently; concentrating on those aspects of staff-training which would enhance the counsellors' skills and abilities to assume increasing responsibility for all aspects of the program, and trying to make the program more cost-effective.

During 1980-1981, 7 para-professional counsellors worked with 10 families each. (The previous "work-load" per counsellor on half-time salary, had been 8 families). Of the 80 families participating in the program (17 of them for their second year) 62 completed the year. Those who dropped out did so primarily as a result of the mother going out to work, or because the family moved. A new phenomenon was the fact that we were increasingly approached by mothers who wanted to join the program, which had become popular in the community. On the whole, the families in the program were better educated, smaller and younger than the ones with whom we worked in prior years, bearing out our contention that the large, semi-literate families once considered arch-typical of the development towns were coming to the end of their child-bearing cycle.

The average family in the program in 1980-1981:

was born in North Africa;
had three children;
had 8-11 years schooling;
the father was a manual worker or craftsman;
the mother a housewife;
the father was aged 29;
the mother was aged 26.

More than half of the families in the program came from the Ramet neighbourhood, a new location for project activities. Thought populated largely by young families, this neighbourhood was reservoir of a variety of social problems, ranging from housing density, severely disturbed inter-familial relations and general cultural and educational impoverishment.

This 'culture of poverty' found expression in the neglected and run-down appearance of the relatively new neighbourhood, and in the less obvious and less tangible cultural and educational deprivation in which the children were growing up. Many of these young mothers, often married while yet in their teens and quickly finding themselves burdenened by two or more children, tended to view their offspring as jailers who kept them tied to the home 24 hours a day, and vented their frustrations on the children.

The sequence and structure of the home-visits were defined more clearly and institutionalized. On the first home-visit, the day and time of future visits was set, and a contract signed, which also obligated the mother to pay a small fee for participation in the program. We introduced the use of an initial acquaintance form, which included direct questions to the mother and was intended to give her a feeling of participation and involvement from the first visit. Through these questions the counsellor was able to draw the mother into broader discussion concerning her child and her child-rearing practices, and thus acquired a general picture of the home environment. One of the initial tasks of the home-visitor was to assess the child's developmental level, so as to establish a base-line measure and guide-lines for the structure of an individual program for each child, providing activities to further his overall development, with stress on those areas of weakness revealed by the evaluation forms. In the past, we had used a simple rating scale developed in the U.S. by the South-East Day Care Project of H.E.W. for this purpose. However, we had come to the conclusion that this scale was not sufficiently sensitive for our needs, and after consultation with experts in the field, decided to introduce the Denver Development Screening Test. Five in-service training sessions were devoted to teaching the para-professional counsellors to use the test, and we were helped in this effort by a clinical child psychologist.

Use of the Denver permitted us to acquire a more accurate profile of the child's developmental level; on occasion, it revealed severe developmental lags, in which case we referred the family for professional help. Throughout the year, we continued to use the Denver to monitor the child's progress.

In order to monitor and evaluate the effect of participation in the program on the mother and her parental functioning, we adopted the Educational Needs Assessment Inventory of Parent Behaviour developed by the DARCEE Training Program for Home Intervention at Peabody College. This inventory provided us with periodic information on the families and their progress, and indirectly helped the counsellors to assess their own performance as role-models, as well as identifying weak areas in the mother's functioning. Though they too suffered from shortcomings, they contributed greatly towards making our intervention more effective and better aligned to the needs and problems of child and parent.

In January 1981, we began planning the content of home-visits according to the outline of the Early Childhood Core curriculum which we had begun to develop. The curriculum was based on 7 developmental stages in the age range from 0 to 3; it stressed the fact that children learn through play, and that parents can help their children develop through play. Play ideas were grouped under 21 main headings, according to the kind of activity (or materials) focused on; activities under each headings were arranged in sequence according to the stage of development when they first became applicable. The curriculum focused attention on the whole child and his development - affective, social and moral no less than cognitive and sensory - motor, with the development of language stressed throughout in all activities. No less it stressed the role of the parent in providing appropriate play (learning) opportunities for the child, and in providing the necessary support, encouragement and guidance.

A number of in-service training sessionswere devoted to teaching the paraprofessional counsellors how to use the curriculum outlines, how to chose an activity suitable to the child's development and special needs,

how to present an activity - to both the child and the mother and how to plan activities and home-visits independently. The resources (games, toys, books, work-materials) needed for implementation of the curriculum were organized and catalogued, so that they were readily available to the counsellors, thus cutting down time spent on preparations.

During the second half of the year, we introduced instruments for evaluation of counsellors' performance by the supervisors, and self-evaluation by the counsellors. Significant progress was made during this year towards institutionalizing the program and reducing the dependence of the indigenous paraprofessional staff on professional supervision. By increasing the case-load of each counsellor to 10 families, the program was made more cost effective. No less important, we were able to answer a real need by extending the program to a new neighbourhood populated by many young parents and children.

1981-1982

So far, we had been less than successful in attaining our objective of furthering social cohesion by means of regular group meetings of mothers in each neighbourhood, partially because of lack of facilities in the Remet neighbourhood where we had begun to operate. In defining our operational objective 1981-1982, we gave top priority to developing a program of regular group meetings of mothers. We had always considered these meetings to be an integral and important part of our program: in terms of the mothers' own needs, the weekly home-visit was but a partial answer; no less, we had been aware all along of the dangers of the mother-counsellor relationship fostering yet a new dependency. The group meetings, in which women could share their experiences and learn from each other, as well as make new friends, was an important step in the direction of community self-help and self-functioning.

The basic pattern for these meetings was carefully thought out and planned by the EMRA counsellors and their supervisor. Since mothers attended the meetings together with their children, at least part of the session had to be devoted to mother-child activities; similarly, provisions had to be made to occupy the children for those parts of the meeting devoted to discussion.

We also felt that it was important to devote a good part of the meetings to some concrete, practical activity and not just to talk, since this is what the mothers valued most. In addition to the monthly group meetings of mothers, all the home-visitors made a concerted effort to interest mothers in the activities at the neighbourhood family centres - and these mothers indeed tended to be among the most active women at the centres and formed the core of the play-groups which were later organized at the centres.

At the end of October, Berl, the program's professional supervisor, went on maternity leave for three months - and the para-professional EMRA counsellors assumed direct responsibility for running the program on their own during this period. This included recruitment and intake of new families, planning home-visits independently, and organizing and running group meetings of mothers. Self-functioning thus turned from a desired goal into reality born of necessity almost overnight. In addition, one of the experienced counsellors undertook the supervision and guidance of the two new counsellors, graduates of the last training course, who were replacing two counsellors who had left.

In keeping with our stated objective of reducing the dependence of the counsellors on the professional supervisor, the main thrust of in-service training and individual supervision moved towards fostering those skills essential to a more rigorous and analytical approach to the counsellors' work - in effect, to a different way of thinking than they were accustomed to.

Whereas in the passed we had emphasised the 'how' of what they were doing, we now began to stress the 'why': what is the rationale underlying each action and activity, what aims does it serve? This approach formed the basis of the goal-orientated planning whose importance we stressed. In operational terms this meant that every activity: home-visit, group meetings, etc. was carefully planned in detail, with objectives, means and anticipated outcomes clearly defined and understood.

The counsellors were directly responsible for planning home-visits and group meetings on their own, and on reporting the outcomes of these activities; in their meetings with the supervisor these outcomes - both successes and failures - were analyzed and discussed. This approach proved to be very rewarding: the more we demanded, the more the counsellors rose to the challenge. They became more self-aware and self-assured, and proud of their enhanced professional status. Working together regularly as a group also resulted in a remarkable degree of group cohesion, mutual aid and support.

Summarizing the year's achievements, we concluded that we had well succeeded in meeting the objectives we had set ourselves, and even in moving beyond them. A further important development was the fact that Project Renewal became an active partner in the EMRA program, paying the salary of 3 of the 7 counsellors in the program. In terms of assuring the continuity of the program beyond the life span of the project, this was of the greatest importance.

1982-1983

During the 1982-1983 school-year, the program, by now well-institutionalized, was working with 60 families in the Ben-Gurion and Remet neighbourhoods. Three new counsellors, graduates of the last training course, had replaced three veteran counsellors on maternity leave, and had been 'broken in' by the three experienced counsellors, who had also been responsible for signing up new families for the program. Mixed teams of experienced and new counsellors met weekly with the program supervisor together, rather than on the individual basis customary in the past. The monthly group meetings of mothers at the neighbourhood centres were planned and conducted by the counsellors on their own with notable success.

A new development was the modified EMRA program introduced by one of the EMRA counsellors into the Ofakim Absorption Centre for new immigrant Ethiopian mothers.

Four groups of five mothers and their infants and toddlers meet weekly for 2-3 hour sessions with the counsellor in a special play-area which was allocated for this purpose. The groups were organized according to the age of the children, and the sessions were divided between work with individual mother-child dyads and group activities such as games, songs, etc.

The Early Childhood Activity file based the developmental needs of the child throughout the first three years of life, was published in booklet form, under the name of 'Step by Step and Side by Side'. In addition to serving the needs of the early-childhood programs in Ofakim and in the new satellite project in the moshavim of the neighbouring Merchavim region, other van Leer projects in Israel introduced it into their programs. No less, we began to get orders for the book from day-care centres, training colleges, and parents who had come across the book and found it helpful.

5. The Program for Teenage Girls

As a result of our involvement with young mothers in the EMRA program, which had hightened our awareness of the problems resulting from too early marriage and inadequate preparation for family life and parenthood, we felt that it was important to reach out to teenage girls. We conceived the idea of establishing a centre in the Remet neighbourhood which would serve two closely related populations - the young mothers of the Remet neighbourhood, and teenage girls from 14 to 18 - especially those who had dropped out of school and lacked a supportive framework. Our primary objective was to provide a 'place-to-belong-to', a warm, inviting environment where they could spend their free time. Through appropriate programs, we hoped to achieve a number of objectives: strenthening of positive self-image, improving interpersonal relations including the mother-daughter relationship, creating a healthy social environment within the community, preparation for dealing with herself as an adult member of the community and for family life.

We had proposed the development or a program for teenage girls in the project proposal for Phase II. However, the grant which was finally approved was somewhat smaller than our original request, and we realized that we would not be able to implement the program unless we were able to find additional support and financing.

We discussed the idea with the director of the Social Welfare Services in Ofakim, who liked the idea and was ready to cooperate with us in the venture. In the spring of 1981, Ofakim was approved as one of the town targeted for Project Renewal activities. A steering committee and various sub-committees were formed, which began gathering information on the needs of the town and its inhabitants, and proposals were solicited and tendered by various groups and organizations. In May 1981 we presented a proposal, co-sponsored by the Social Welfare Services to the local steering committee of Project Renewal. The proposal was eventually approved in October 1981.

The difficulties we faced in establishing the new Remet neighbourhood centre have already been described in an earlier part of this report. This was our first experience in running a program directly linked to a statutory authority - and also our first taste of the inhibiting influence of bureaucracy. Almost a year elapsed before the promised furniture and equipment were finally made available. The project was asked to provide temporary financing to cover operational expenses and the salary of the house-mother for the teenage girls' centre; this outlay was only returned to us in the fall of 1982, and since it was not index-linked, meant a financial loss for us. We were however determined to begin operation as soon as possible. The program for teenage girls was initiated in October 1981, operating at first on a part-time basis, two afternoons weekly : one afternoon, the centre was utilized by the social worker assigned to 'teenage girls at risk' who ran a group-dynmics workshop in which a group of girls under her care participated; on the second afternoon, the centre operated on an open-house basis, opening its doors to any girl who wanted to participate in activities. By February 1982, the centre was operating 5 afternoons weekly. The loosely-structured program included discussions on topics chosen by the girls, holiday celebrations, cooking. and handicrafts. The house-mother's duties included community out-reach, and part of her time was devoted to establishing contact with girls unfamiliar with the centre. A nucleus of 15-20 began to visit the centre on a regular basis. Usually a girl who liked coming to the centre began to bring her friends.

The girls ranged in age from 13-16, and came from a variety of educational backgrounds. Some came from the local high-schools, both the secular and the religious; some from a combined work/study program run by the youth authorities; others were drop-outs who neither studied or worked.

Despite the fact that the centre lacked facilities and was not especially attractive, the girls continued to come, bearing out our belief that a meeting place for teenage girls was both necessary and important as a positive alternative to remaining at home or 'hanging-out' at the town centre. Most of these girls came from very traditional homes, where they are expected to play an active role in running the household and caring for the younger children, and where there is little awareness of their social and emotional needs. In their attempts to escape the constricting home environments, they become easy prey for anyone offering often simulated warmth, affection and excitement. With little guidance (and that usually in the form of prohibitions) from their parents, and little exposure to society at large, many of them only too easily got into trouble. Despite the reluctance of the community to admit the existance of the problem, there is a fairly high incidence of teenage pregnancies and sexual delinquency in the town. The main objective of the centre was to bring the girls in contact with other girls their age and with understanding and trained adults, in the hope that:

1. *they would find in the centre a home away from home where they would be be able to feel comfortable and be themselves;*
2. *the centre would provide a forum where the many questions troubling adolescents could be discussed and answered in a honest and straight-forward way;*
3. *the centre would be able to teach and inculcate life-skills, from how to plan a meal and buy and select groceries to how to behave in various social situations.*

An unpredicted problem was the tendency of teenagers to form cliques and in-groups: as younger girls began to come to the centre, some of the older-ones felt ill-at-ease; similarly the girls attending high-school tended to snob the working girls and the drop-outs.

In planning the program for the following year, these were factors that had to be taken into consideration and we looked for ways in which we would be able to meet the needs and expectations of each group. This program had been from the beginning a joint venture in which we cooperated closely with the Social Welfare Services, and in particular with the social worker responsible for work with delinquent teenage girls and girls from 'high-risk' families. Whereas our main concern was to develop a program suitable for girls from different backgrounds, of wide appeal, in which the school-drop-out or delinquent girl would not feel stigmatized, the social worker's primary concern was to establish a facility for the girls who were in her care. This inevitably led to friction, and eventually, to a parting of ways. The Social Selfare Services politely suggested that we withdraw. Since this program was almost completely financed by Project Renewal, and officially under the supervision of the Ministry of Welfare we had little choice but to do just that, and in the fall of 1982 we terminated our involvement. Though sorry not to continue this effort, we were not regretful that we had begun it, because without our initiative and initial efforts, it is doubtful whether such a program would have gotten of the ground.

6. The Tutorial Program

The tutorial program for children at risk in the Eli Cohen neighbourhood developed as an offshoot of the neighbourhood centre activities and our previous involvement in the elementary schools serving the neighbourhood. It was conceived as a partial answer to the special problems of children at the beginning of their school careers, from large and culturally impoverished families, who were unable to provide their children with the necessary measures of support, direction and stimulation - in other words, children who stood little chance of breaking out of the vicious circle of deprivation.

The youngsters chosen as tutors were all volunteers, students at the two local high-schools, where we had met with the junior classes to explain the program and its aims - stressing the intrinsic rewards that they temselves would derive from this activity in terms of their own development.

Although scholastic achievement was not one of the criter a for selection, the 12 volunteers (all girls) were outstanding pupils,sharing qualities of curiosity, a desire to try out their own abilities, and a concern for people. Some of them came themselves from family backgrounds similar to that of the children.

The first two months were devoted to training the tutors for their role. The group met weekly for 8 training sessions, aimed at broadening their understanding of the needs and problems of the children, their social background and its influence, and at providing them with the skills necessary to work effectively with the children. Interpersonal communication and the development of a repertoire of suitable activities were key elements of this training program. The group tried out all of the planned activities on itself, noting and analyzing their own reactions and feelings. These weekly training sessions continued after the actual tutoring had begun, and the group went on to examine the various concepts on which the program was based: learning through discovery, creativity, imagination, self-expression, etc. These meetings, which continued until the end of the school-year, contributed a great deal to the tutors own self-development and personal enrichment, and helped them to understand themselves - obviously an important concern of any teenager. No less, the experience enhanced their own self-image.

Parallel to this initial training period, contact was established by the supervisor with the parents of the children, to whom the program was explained, and whose permission had to be granted. Without exception, the response was positive - on the whole these parents were concerned with helping their children, and aware of their own limitations. The supervisor also accompanied each tutor to her first meeting with the child and his family. Initially we had planned for all sessions to take place in the child's home, but we were forced to modify this. Some of the children were too ashamed of their homes to have the tutor come there - and the tutors themselves lacked the experience and skill to overcome the children's (and their own) blocks. Thus the meetings between the tutors and the children (for a minimum of 2 hours weekly) were usually held either at the tutor's house or at the neighbourhood centre.

These meetings were devoted to playing games, reading stories, poems and excerpts from the newspaper and discussing them, short excursions, visits to the library to chose books, solving puzzles, etc. Each tutor, under the on-going supervision of Shoshana, the program supervisor, planned her sessions according to the needs and interests of the specific child, aiming especially to broaden his experiences and encourage the child to express himself verbally and otherwise. Shoshana met with each tutor individually on a bi-weekly basis. Thursday afternoons all the children in the program met together at the neighbourhood centre.

We hoped that by meeting some of the child's basic needs for attention and encouragement as well as providing him with tools for coping more effectively, we would also be creating the pre-conditions for more effective learning, and that the various enrichment activities would also improve the child's cognitive skills, providing him with tools for analysis and problem solving.

We viewed as no less important the objectives we hoped to achieve in working with the youths engaged in tutoring: a broadening of personal horizons and enrichment, the fostering of responsibility towards the community and willingness to personally participate in grappling with its problems and needs.

The program was of too short duration (actual tutoring began in January and continued until the beginning of June) to enable us to evaluate its efficacy as regards the children; as far as the tutors were concerned, the benefits they derived from the program were very much in evidence.

At the end of the school-year, we began negotiations with the high-school headmasters regarding the coming year. We hoped to be able to select the tutors before the summer vacation, so as to be able to begin work immediately when the new term began.

Possibly inspired by our own efforts, the high-school had decided to develop their own school-based tutorial program, matching scholastically successful upper-grade pupils with lower-grade ones in need of tutoring - and we were told that the candidates for our program were obviously the same group the school planned to involve in its program. Under these circumstances, we concluded that we had no choice but to discontinue what in our eyes, at least, was a promising experiment.

7. Staff Training

No less than the programs themselves, the process of selecting and training para-professional counsellors for work in the project's programs became institutionalized. We continued to run yearly courses, adhering in basic structure and methodology to the design developed for the first training course which was held in 1978. The basic curriculum continues to cover the three concentric circles of our concern: the child, the family, and the community with methodology based on theoretical learning linked to direct personal experience of the subject at hand. On the basis of past experience, we made the selection process more stringent, stressing intrinsic qualities - native intelligence, sensitivity, motivation-rather than prior formal schooling, insofar as these can be assessed. We added a written interview to the selection process, to increase the validity of our choices. The familial quality of inter-personal relations in a small town, as well as the loyalties and ties which develop within a group while studying and working together make subsequent dismissal from the course or from work extremely painful and disruptive; thus it is very important that initial judgements be as accurate as possible. Thus much effort and thought were devoted to the screening of candidates.

In addition to written and oral interviews and home-visits to each candidate, we checked character references. Last, but not least, we relied on the least objective of the chosen criteria - the collective 'gut feeling' of the team which interviewed the candidates.

With the beginning of the moshav satellite project, and our sister project in S'derot-Sha'ar Hanegev, the group of trainees expanded, and the course structure was somewhat modified. The larger numbers permitted us to sub-divide the group into those who would be working with infants and toddlers (0-3) and with older children (3-8).

We also shortened the course to 80-90 study hours, having come to realize that certain topics were more effectively dealt with after the counsellors were already at work. At best, a course of this duration could serve as no more than an introduction, creating awareness and setting forth basic principles and we had thus come to place increasing emphasis on the on-going in-service training. By the time we reached our 5th training course in 1982, further changes had then place:

1. with the exception of one topic, that of inter-personal communications and group dynamics, all of the course was taught by the project's own professional staff;

2. we had raised our expectations and demands from the course participants considerably. Reading assignments and written excercises formed an integral part of course work, and self-expression (both verbal and written) was emphasized; participants were asked to summarize material and present it to the group, etc. Topics were presented in problem-orientated rather than strictly informative fashion, thus fostering group discussion.

In the context of the project's aim that the para-professional counsellor should serve as a role-model and leader for other women in the community, the evaluations made by the course-participants are particularly interesting. Although expressing uncertainty about the degree to which they felt prepared to guide other women, and aware of the fact that much of what they had learnt was rudimentary, they stressed the following:

1. the course had made them aware of many things which they had not thought about before or which they had been unfamiliar with;

2. The course had contributed a great deal to their personal development, their self-understanding, their relations with husbands and children. Many of the women spoke of how they had shared their newly-acquired knowledge with their husbands.

3. They had begun to apply what they learnt in their own role as parents, and were able to report on changes in their childrens' behaviour and their own behaviour in relation to their children.

4. They felt they had a much greater awareness of the child's needs and a better understanding of how to meet these needs.

5. The course had given them self-confidence: some of them had been unsure of their ability to return to the world of the classroom and the demands of study, but they had managed to overcome their insecurity, and felt that now they would be able to begin a new chapter in their lives.

6. The group-dynamics sessions had made them more sensitive to others, and more aware of how other people responded to them.

7. Unanimously, they expressed the need and desire to learn more.

In-service training

One of the major tasks, in working with para-professionals, is to provide for their increasing professionalization through on-going process of in-service training. Within the context of the project, there was the added challenge of reducing the indigenous para-professional counsellors' dependency on professionals from outside the community, while shifting increasing responsibility for all aspects of project operations onto their shoulders.

We believe the emphasis placed on on-going training to be one of the main factors responsible for the increasingly effective performance of the project staff. We would however be doing less than justice to the project and its staff if we gave the impression that task-effectiveness were our only aim. No less important was the personal growth and development of the project's counsellors which was enhanced by this process - sometimes quite dramatically.

G. "Phasing-Out": January - December 1983

In April 1981 the Association for Education and Community had been set up in Ofakim, composed of representatives of the Ofakim Local Council, the Ofakim Community Centre Association and the Institute for Education and Community Development. An executive committee consisting of four representatives of the first two organizations and of the project director began to meet regularly to decide on all policy issues, including budget, employment of personnel, new programmes, etc. Despite our initial fears, this group succeeded in working together most amicably and took its responsibilities very seriously. Since the members of the executive committee were influential in other spheres, their commitment to the project was in many ways very important in furthering its legitimization and acceptance by the community, as well as its expansion. The operational budget of the Ofakim project was transferred to the Association's bank account in monthly installments; all project staffers became employees of the Association (in the past, some had been employed by the Institute for Education and Community Development, others by the Ofakim Local Council). Operationally, Project Education and Community Development in Ofakim came under complete control of this representative local organization.

In January 1983, the project entered its last operational year. January is also the time when government ministries and municipalities as well as Project Renewal begin to prepare their budgets and concomitant operational plans for the following fiscal year, which begins in April. Thus, in January 1983, the executive committee of the Ofakim Association for Education and Community Development undertook to organize support and militate for the continuation of project activities in Ofakim. The concerted efforts of the executive committee and the project staff to mobilize resources to finance continuation of project activities after the termination of Foundation support in December 1983, was on the whole successful. With the exception of the play and parent guidance corners in the clinics, all of the project's programs were picked up by Project Renewal and the Educational Welfare Project of the Ministry of Education.*

* This in effect meant support for the fiscal year from April 1983 to March 1984; further support would have to be re-negotiated the following year.

Given the continuing hostility of the mayor and some of his appointees to the project, this was no small victory. No less important was the agreement signed with the treasurer of the municipality and the local director of Project Renewal regarding the transfer of funds: the Association for Education and Community would function as sub-contractor, directly responsible for implementation of approved programs; funding would be transferral on a monthly basis. This arrangement gave the Association much greater operational freedom than would have been the case if each program were directly supervised by one or the other of the municipality's departments, the usual procedure. It also facilitated integration between programs and interchange of personnel within the project's programs, as needed. No less, the Association, in its role as employer, was in a better position to protect the project and its staff from political pressures. The municipality's finance committee agreed to assume responsibility for administrative costs for the period from January 1984 to the end of the fiscal year (31.3.84). After approval of the programs submitted by the Association for the fiscal year of 1983-1984 by the local Project Renewal steering committee and the national inter-ministerial committee, budget cuts were made by the national administration of Project Renewal. These cuts forced us to cut back activities planned for September-December 1983 (which were to be financed by both Fundation funds and Project Renewal funds). The workplan and budget for September-December 1983 reflected these realities: we curtailed or closed down all activities unassured of financial support until at least the end of March 1983, cut back professional staff, transferring some of the supervisory and training functions to the most capable of our para-professional staff, and planned further reductions in professional back-up services at the end of December 1983, when Foundation support would end and the project would officially be concluded. We were able to avoid terminating employment of local staff, and in fact planned to train another 3 new counsellors.

If, on one hand, we were able to congratulate ourselves on the fact that such extensive support for the project had been forthcoming despite the deteriorating economic situation and the fierce competition for existing funds, we were also keenly aware of the fact that all our efforts to assure continuity might yet come to nothing. In June of 1983, the political climate in Ofakim became very tense, as the town prepared itself for municipal elections in November. The incumbent mayor, Mr. Avraham Revivo, (our "bete noire") was being challenged not only by our old friend and prior mayor, Mr. Yechiel Bentov, but also by Mr. Moshe Dahan - a member of Mr. Revivo's own party, who, with other members of the Local Council, had decided to challenge the latter's leadership, had broken with his party, and was running on an independent slate. Since Mr. Dahan was also the chairman of the executive committee of the Association for Education and Community in Ofakim, we were now doubly damned in Mr. Ravivo's eyes, and were given to understand that if Mr. Revivo were re-elected, we would not be able to count on his support. The election of Mr. Bentov, and the formation of a local coalition in which Mr. Dahan serves as deputy-mayor assured us, for the first time in years, of friendship and cooperation from the Ofakim Local Council, and permitted the smooth transfer of the project to local hands.

H. <u>The Final Months: September - December 1983</u>

The shape and scope or the project in its final months was determined by a number of factors, none of them in our control, which conveyed towards the end of the summer of 1983. We had already decided, in the spring, not to continue activites which would not be supported after the project's termination in December 1983.

<u>The Play and Parent Guidance Corners</u>

At the end of June, we closed down two of the three play and parent guidance corners in the clinics. The third corner, in the 'B' Kupat Holim Clinic, was financed by the Association for Advancement of Health and Education in the Negev, and we decided to keep it running as long as that support held out.

The Neighbourhood Family Centres

Another wrenching change resulted when we were forced to evacuate the Ben-Gurion neighbourhood centre. Lack of adequate educational provisions in the rapidly expanding Ben-Gurion neighbourhood left the municipality with no choice but to return the centre to its original use - as kindergarten. An agreement was reached with the Local Council to provide us with an alternative site, a kindergarten in the centre of town opposite the municipality, where we would be able to run our activitiy program for mothers and toddlers in the mornings, using the same site as Early Childhood Resource Centre in the afternoons. We feared that many of the women who had attended the activities in the Ben-Gurion centre would not continue to come, given the added distance; however, we hoped that new clients would become involved. The program at the new site offered those activities which had proven to be most successful in the past: discussion groups on family life; toy-making; home-economics; guest-speakers, etc.

The afternoon activity program for children aged 3-8 was transferred to one of the kindergartens in the Ben-Gurion neighbourhood itself, thus removing the hazard of children having to cross the main street in order to reach the centre. Lack of sufficient funding made it impossible to operate a full schedule of morning activities in three neighbourhood centres. Applying the principle of 'triage' we decided to discontinue the morning activity program in the Eli Cohen centre, where participation had been rather sparse in the last year. We hoped to encourage the neighbourhood women to organize some activities on their own, utilizing the existant facilities and equipment, and to provide them with whatever support they might need. We hoped that the investment of several years activity would prove not to have been in vain, and that sufficient local leadership would emerge to make this a viable alternative. The afternoon activity program in this centre, which had been successful throughout, contiuned as before.

In the Remet neighbourhood, a women's club-house which had been contructed by Project Renewal, was to serve as our base of operations, and was to be operated by members of our staff.

Since it was unlikely that we would be able to move in before the municipal elections, we planned to begin the year in our old cramped apartment.

After discussions held with the core group of mothers who had been active in the centre, we decided to give priority to the establishment of a parent-run cooperative play-group for 20 toddlers aged 1½-2½. The group would meet 5 mornings weekly, and would be run by one of our para-professional counsellors and two mothers on a rota system, with the mothers participating in a two-week training course in September. We would continue to run discussion groups on family life, home-economics, and toy-making circles. We also planned to run an afternoon activity program for 3-8 year olds in one of the neighbourhood's kindergarten, along the lines of the program in the Eli Cohen and Ben-Gurion centres.

EMRA Home-Intervention Program

This program was to be funded in full by Project Renewal as of September 1983 and expanded to 100 families throughout Ofakim. Beryl Yahav, who in addition to supervising the program was also to assume responsibility for overall project coordination, would be assisted by one of the para-professional counsellors, Margo Kadosh. The case-load of each counsellor was raised to 11 families each.

Despite the success of our counselling program with the Falasha immigrants in the Ofakim absorption centre, this activity could not be continued, since the Jewish Agency was unwilling to support continuation of the program in the Ofakim Absorption Centre whose residents were soon due to move into the community-at-large or to other towns.

The Early Childhood Resource Centre

As of September 1983, operations of the Early Childhood Resource Centre were financed by the Educational Betterment Project of the Ministry of Welfare, under the supervision of the Ministry of Education's kindergarten supervisors and the municipality's Department of Education.

This was in keeping with our plans, which called for handing over the centre to the municipality at the beginning of the 1983-1984 school-year. An unforseen development was the demand of the kindergarten supervisor for the National Religious Sector for separate and equal facilities. In keeping with the policy of the Ministry of Education, this was approved, and each sector was granted a half-time position to staff the centre and serve as liason and resource persons for the kindergarten teachers of their respective sectors.

September 1983 found the project and its staff attempting to adjust to the structural changes which had been introduced, against a background of ambiguity and uncertainty regarding the future. It was clear that everything hinged on the outcome of the municipal elections which were to be held in November. Until then, everything in the town seemed to be in a state of limbo, and all public activity not connected with the elections seemed to come to a standstill. Against our will, we were drawn into the fray; two of the contenders for the position of mayor, Mr. Yechiel Bentov and Mr. Moshe Dahan, were closely associated with the project, and did not hesitate to stress the point where appropriate. This of course further incensed the incumbent mayor and his minions against the project. Project Renewal and government ministries kept their distance, and avoided making commitments which might later prove embarassing. (This cost us dear, for some of the money owed to us we were never able to reclaim later). For the para-professional local staff of the project this was an especially difficult period. A number of them had to undergo the rather upsetting change of moving to a new site or neighbourhood, or a different type of program (for example, the women who had run the play and guidance corners in the clinics). Not only was the atmosphere in the town electric, but it seemed that everything we did was observed and commented on. Rumors were rife - the project would be disbanded; it would be taken over by the municipality; everybody would be fired; no, there was nothing to worry about. The professional staff of the project had been radically reduced, and the para-professional staggers had to assume new responsabilities.

On the whole, they met these challenges better than any one could have expected. Everything proceeded according to plan; the project operated like a well-oiled machine, and the inevitable difficulties and unexpected problems were dealt with competently by the local staff.

The election results, which returned Mr. Yechiel Bentov to the post of mayor in November 1984, dramatically brought to an end a long struggle for survival and legitimation - a month before the termination of the project. Suddenly we were welcome in places where for long we had been 'personae non grata'.

The question of the project's continuity and its transfer to the community was now a matter of common concern, to which the mayor and the Local Council were committed no less than the Institute for Education and Community Development, the project staff, or myself, for whom more than six years of involvement with the Ofakim community were drawing to a close.

My last activity was the preparation of the proposal submitted to the local steering committee of Project Renewal and the Educational Welfare Project, on whose financial support the continuity of project programs depended. Despite the deteriorating financial situation in the country at large and in Ofakim (where the newly-elected council had inherited an exorbiant deficit), which sharpened the competition for these special funds, our proposal was eventually adopted with almost no changes.

I. January - March 1984 - 'Handing Over and Moving Out'

Although the project officially ended in December 31, 1983, the unbilical cord was not cut until March 1984. These last months were not easy, and had a bitter-sweet flavor of their own. Proposals for continued funding of programs by Project Renewal had been submitted - but these were not approved finally until the end of March; moreover, it was necessary to lobby intensively to gain support for them.

The economic situation had worsened and budgets were being cut back - and our proposals asked for a large chunk of the available funds. It was also generally concluded that it was neither economical nor practical to continue maintaining a separate organizational and administrative framework for the project programs. This in turn posed new problems. Eventually it was decided that some of the counsellors would be employed by the municipality, and others by the Community Centre. The Association for Education and Community paid severance pay to all the projects employees, and in effect terminated its activities. For the para-professional counsellors, the feeling was somewhat like that of fledgling birás cast out of their nest, to fly on their own. In addition, most of them were forced to take a salary cut. With the exception of myself, all of the professional staff from outside Ofakim had already left the project in the fall. I remained for another three months to deal with all the problems of the final transfer of the project to the community, as well as substituting for Beryl Yahav, the officially designated project coordinator, who was on maternity leave until the end of March. (Beryl, a university trained early childhood educator and herself a resident of Ofakim,remained as the only professional with the project). However, this too came to an end, and as of April 1, 1984, the project was completely in control of the people of Ofakim. The fact that it was by now assured of the continued financial support of Project Renewal and the Educational Welfare project, as well as the moral support of the local political establishment,meant that despite the inev table traumatic experience of 'cutting the project loose' the transition was effected with a minimum of upset or disruption of activities.

During the months that followed, what had over the past six years grown and developed into the Community Education Project more and more became an integral part of the community life of Ofakim.

J. A Year Later - January 1985

1984 was a year of adaption and change no less than of continuity. All of the programs had been taken under the wing of Project Renewal and the Educational Welfare Project (with the exception of the clinic programs), thus assuring their on-going functioning. However, in itself this was by no means a guarantee that the unique character of the project would be preserved. Whereas the project had emphasised process no less than outcomes Project Renewal demanded quantifiable goals: how many people would attend, how many activities, how often, etc. The project had emphasised integration of community-based educational programs into a mutually reinforcing network. Not only was there no longer an integrating, unifying structure (some programs came under the auspices of the Ministry of Education; others under the Ministry of Welfare; some were financed through the municipality, others through the Community Centre, etc.); indeed, there were now advisors who militated against the continued existance of such a framework. It became clear that if this situation continued, discrete programs might perhaps survive, but the unique character and function of the project in the community would be lost. Towards the end of the year, a solution finally presented itself in the form of the Ofakim Community Centre, which agreed to assume administrative and organizational responsibility for the project. The Community Centre had recently acquired a dynamic new director, whose understanding of community needs and how to meet them was very much like our own, and who was only too happy to incorporate a full-fledged program of informal, community-based educational activities for parents and children. The following is an overview of the project, as it appeared in January 1985.

The EMRA Home-Intervention Program

6 para-professional counsellors work with 75 families, drawn from all over Ofakim. The basic program structure - weekly home-visits and monthly group meetings - remains unchanged, as does the program curriculum. The counsellors are making a concerted attempt to interest families in their care in other available community programs. Increasing financial difficulties have forced the program to streamline operations. The plan for the 1985-1986 operational year calls for 5 counsellors, each working with 16 families (this is double the original case-load in 1978!)

It is felt that this will adequately meet the needs of parents of infants and toddlers in Ofakim.

The EMUN Cooperative Play-Group Program

In each of the functioning neighbourhood centres (the Eli Cohen Family Centre and the Remet Women's Club-house) a group of 20 mothers and toddlers aged 1 - 3 participate in the EMUN program. The EMUN Cooperative Play-Group meets 4 times weekly from 8 to 12 A.M.; each day two mothers on rota run the activities together with a para-professional counsellor. The women participating have all taken part in a brief (one-week) orientation course and meet at regular bi-weekly intervals. The cost of play materials and refreshments is covered by the fee paid by the participants, who also make all the purchases, prepare the food, etc. In 1985-1986, two additional groups will begin functioning - one in the 'Brecha' area, and the other in the Ben-Gurion neighbourhood. We believe that this program can eventually become almost self-supporting financially, and is thus particularly suitable for this era of tight funds. In many respects this has turned out to be the most successful program, meeting a variety of needs of both mothers and children and achieving quite spectacular results with a minimal investment. The year spent in the program is one of remarkable personal growth for child and mother.

The Enrichment and Activity Program for 3 to 8 year olds

In January 1985, the Neighbourhood-based Enrichment and Activity Program was running in three sites: the Eli Cohen Neighbourhood Centre, the Remet Women's Club, and a shelter in the Ben-Gurion neighbourhood. The program continued along the lines developed over the years in the project, with two para-professionals supervising activities in each centre.

The plans for 1985-1986 call for some changes. With a resurgence of activities for school-age children, it was felt that the program should concentrate on the younger children, up to age six. No less, the need for increased cost-effectiveness led to the decision to decrease the staff to one counsellor in each centre.

Beryl Yahav, now officially coordinator for informal early childhood education programs in the community, supervises and coordinates the activities in these programs.

The Early Childhood Resource Centre continues to function under the auspices of the Ofakim Department of Education. Shula Ganz, a local kindergarten teacher supervisor who worked closely with the project, continues to run the centre, organizing workshops for kindergarten teachers and parents, as well as continuing to develop the available resources.

As for the Remet Women's Centre: this is now under the responsibility of Nazal Atias, the project's first para-professional counsellor, who worked with the project from 1977 onward. As a satellite of the Ofakim Community Centre, it is running a variety of activities for women in the Remet neighbourhood and the surrounding area.

Despite the changes that have come about, the project is not only still alive, but very much a part of the life of the community.

II INTERVENTION FOR SOCIAL CHANGE AS A DYNAMIC PROCESS

The dictionary defines intervention as 'interference in the affairs of others, so as to prevent or modify'; 'coming between as an influencing force'; 'coming in as something extraneous'... and, no less, as 'to come between as something unnecessary or irrelevant'. Viewed as a continuuum, these definitions establish a range of possibilities from the beneficial and benign to the disruptive and wrongful. Were our purpose to define a typology of interventions, it might be valuable to determine criteria according to which specific interventions could be placed on the continuum; undoubtedly these would include such factors as the aims of the intervention, the motivation of the interviewer, the style of intervention, etc. However, the denominator common to all the above definitions - interference in the affairs of others - which inevitably poses the question of 'why', and 'by what right'. These questions acquire additional relevancy when the object of the intervention under consideration is social change, and its locus a specific community and not an abstract social catagory. As to the 'why', we answer: because we perceive a problem, and envision a possible solution; as to 'by what right', we can say, with John Donne, that "no man is an island entire of itself". The social problems of the society of which we are part are inevitably our problems, and hence a responsibility in which we share.

Perception of the Problem

A social problem exists only insofar as people are conscious and aware of its existance. Robert K. Merton, defining the nature of a social problem, postulates the existance of substantial discrepancies between widely shared social standards and the actual conditions of life; however, these discrepancies qualify as social problems only when they are perceived as corregible and subject to human control; "when the ethic of fatalism is replaced by the ethic of responsibility, in which knowledge of the sources of social problems and efforts to control them become defined as a moral obligation".

How does a social problem acquire substance? Under what circumstances does a given set of social facts come to be perceived as a social problem? Sometimes a dramatic event or trauma will radically alter people's perceptions of their own situation, sufficiently disturbing their equilibrium so as to provide the impetus for social change. Sometimes, heightened awareness of an existant social problem will originate with individuals or organizations themselves not directly affected and in effect 'outside' the situation, whose perceptions have been sharpened by clearly defined societal values. Yet again, social unrest, structural changes and changing values in the society at large will suddenly bring covert social problems into sharp focus.

Whatever its genesis, perception of the existance of a social problem must obviously precede any intervention for social change.

Definition of the Problem

Perception of the existance of a social problem is however only the first, preliminary step, which must be followed by definition of the problem. At face value, this appears to be so self-evident as to be trivial and banal. However, correct definition of the problem is the crucial corner-stone of any intervention. What are the causes and the consequences of the problem? What is its scope? Who are its victims? And, no less, who are its beneficiaries? The same set of 'social facts' can be defined in a variety of ways, and it is questionable whether there ever exists one unqualified and unquestioned definition. Moreover, definition of social problems are never value-free, and inevitably reflect the value-matrix and societal perspective of the definer (We can define poverty as the result of socio-economic processes, as the result of indolence, as punishment by supernatural forces, etc.). One of the initial problems faced by the external interviewer or change-agent are the different definitions of the problem which confront him: his own, those of the client population, and those of other forces in the field. Minimal consensus regarding the definition of the problem is thusno less crucial to the intervention than correct definition of the problem.

Perception of the Solution

Almost inseparable from step one and two (perception of the problem and definition of the problem) is step three - perception of the solution. Perception of the solution is not to be confused (especially not in the mind of the intervener) with the operational goals and objectives of the intervention - a much later step. Perception of the solution is in effect, the vision 'of what might be'. No less than the preceding steps, it is mediated by the values, the world-view, of the intervener - and hopefully, as the intervention proceeds, of the client population. It is the vision 'of what might be' that provides the impetus to act, and that sustains momentum in the face of obstacles.

Initiation of Action

Awareness of the existance of a problem, understanding of its nature, and perception of solutions or alternative realities do not of themselves lead to intervention for social change. The translation of theory into practice is a qualitative change, a transmutation; one might even say, a jump of faith, fuelled by the belief in the possibility of change. For without implicit belief in the possibility of change, in the existance of solutions (even if imperfect) to problems, action is impossible. The process of intervention for social change demands a constant re-affirmation of this belief. The intervener's belief in the possibility of change (implied, of course, is change for the better) and his vision of 'what might be' are of major importance in any intervention for social change. The degree to which he is able to 'infect' the client population with his belief that change is possible and problems soluble is a crucial element in any successful intervention.

The Dialectics of Intervention

So far we have touched on the steps preceeding intervention. With the decision 'to do something' about the defined problem, intervention in effect begins.

Intervention for social change implies the introduction of change into an existing social system. Regardless of their size, systems are, by their very nature, complex webs of interdependencies which must be considered in planning change.

We may assume that any system in which we are able to intervene is, by definition, an open system, in constant interaction with its environments, both affecting and affected by it. The same holds true for the interaction of the various elements, or subsystems, within the system. We may also assume that any social system is subject to strains, stresses and conflicts, vulnerable to pressures and affected by shifting power relationships, from both within and without. Insofar as there is a constant within - it is change. Intervention thus implies the introduction of change not into a static, but a dynamic system - and this holds true even when change is most resisted. It is thus impossible to plan for social change in linear terms of stimulus - response or cause and effect.

The change agent is himself subject to change effected by his interaction with the system in which he is intervening, affecting his perception and definition of the problems with which he is concerned, and their envisioned solution, as well as the chosen goals and strategies of the intervention. Intervention, as understood here, is not an act or series of acts initiated by change-agent and carried out on a passive client population, but an ongoing process of interaction between change agent and client. Moreoever, intervention for change in a social system is an ongoing dialectical process of initiated actions, feedback, self-correction and modification leading to improved and refined versions of the initial actions and new innovations; further feedback, further modification, and so forth.

Goals, Strategies and Parameters of Intervention

Intervention for social change has a clear directional focus on what may be designated in broad terms as 'progress'. No less implicit in the definition of intervention for social change as process is a developmental model of change: a realization and actualization of existing, inherent potentials, an expansion of horizons, an extension of the possible. Belief in progress and in the realization of human potential are in effect the meta-goals of intervention for social change, as defined above. Operational goals, on the other hand, though permeated by meta-goals, are shaped and defined in the interactive process, negotiated in the interchanges between change-agent and client system.

Operational goals, as distinct from meta-goals, reflect a balance of the desirable and the possible. Factors both within and without the system affect the choice of operational goals and the definition of the parameters of the intervention: the value systems of both change agent and client, the resources, both human and material, which can be mobilized, the power-relationships within the client system and those impacting on it from outside. The greater the change-agent's knowledge and understanding of the structure and dynamics of the client system, the better the 'fit' of operational goals and strategies to the situation in which change is to be effected. Nonetheless, modification and change of operational goals is a concomitant factor in intervention for social change - an inevitable outcome of the feedback processes discussed before.

Strategies are determined much in the same fashion as operational goals. Shaped as much by constraints and possibilities within and without the system as by the meta-goals of the intervention, strategy too must by needs be flexible and changeable in response to the needs and perceptions of the client system and the changing circumstances in the system and its environment.

The Role of the Change-Agent

If we view social change as a developmental process of growing awareness and perception of needs and problems and a matching growth of the capacity, skill and will to cope with them, it becomes obvious that such change cannot be imposed, but must be effected from within the system. The definition of the change-agent's role is thus derived from the definition of the nature of social change. The change-agent is in the first instance a catalyst for change, and above all, a facilitator of change.

III THE STORY OF AN INTERVENTION

In Part I of this report I described the circumstances which brought the problems of what in the 70's was popularly called 'the second Israel' to public awareness, stimulating a variety of initiatives and interventions - among them, Project Education and Community Development, the subject of this report.

1. The Problem in General

The problem of the socio-economic gap in Israel and its related problems of social inequality and deprivation, must be viewed within the specific context of Israel's unique development as a nation. Not only is Israel probably the only country in the world sharing the problems of both the highly industrialized welfare states of the West and those of newly developing nations; it is also unique insofar as in the first three years of its existance it doubled its population, and eventually quadrupled it.

The Jewish population at the time of the establishment of the state numbered 650,000. It was a relatively homogeneous social and economic group, compound largely of self-selected and highly motivated immigrants from Eastern and Western Europe, who shared a common commitment to the establishment of a modern democratic Jewish state.

The generation which laid the foundations for the economic, social,administrative, military and educational institutions of the future state shared a common ethos of social equality and justice. Socialist-Zionism, with its aims of self-labor and non-exploitation, settlement of the land and the return of the Jewish people to productive occupations was, though by no means shared by all the inhabitants of the pre-state Yishuv, nontheless the dominant ethos of the society, the "genius" which created the uniquely Israeli communal and cooperative forms of the kibbutz, the moshav, the worker-owned industrial enterprises, cooperatives, and mutual-aid organizations of the Histadrut. Not ideology, but highly complex, pragmatic problems which would have fazed wealthier, more powerful, and more firmly established nations underly the development of the socio-economic gap and the concomitant problems of deprivation and inequality in Israel.

Socially, culturally, and economically, the mass immigration which poured into the country after 1984 was radically different from earlier selective waves of immigration. 2/3 of the new immigrants came from technologically and economically undeveloped African and Asian countries in which they had suffered from discrimination, insecurity, and poverty, and in which their economic existance had been severely circumscribed. On the whole, they arrived economically destitute, without vocational skills, training or education. As opposed to the almost universal literacy of the pre-state population, 40% of the new immigrants were illiterate. Their social organization was that of traditionally orientated societies: large families,extended family networks dominated by partriarchal authority, strong religious orientation. In addition, non-selective immigration brought many aged and chronically ill. This immigration presented as two-fold challenge: on the one hand,for intensive and rapid development of economic, social and educational facilities for the absorption of the new immigrants - the creation of jobs, housing, schools, welfare services, etc.; on the other, need for the effective integration of large masses of people coming from pre-industrialized societies into the fabric of a modern society, as equal and active members of that society.Paradoxially, some of the very solutions which in themselves provided viable answers to the massive problems of absorption also served to increase the socio-economic gap, and with it, the problems of inequality and deprivation.

Immediate, stop-gap solutions to the problems of housing and employment: transit camps of wooden and tin pre-fabs and tents; afforestation, road construction and building projects assured every immigrant of a roof of sorts over his head and some form of livelihood - but also served to create an instant lower class composed of immigrants from Asian and African countries. A concerted and intensive national effort to ensure economic expansion and development resulted in a radical and rapid improvement in the general standard of living; however, it failed to eliminate the socio-economic gap which mass immigration had brought in its wake.

Within the framework of a national program providing for population dispersal, the settling of undeveloped and border areas, the increase of agricultural and industrial production and self-sufficiency, and the provision of homes and livelihoods for the new immigrants, new moshavim and development towns were created and populated by freshly-arrived immigrants. Lack of prior experience and preparation for self-government and autonomous organization of municipal affairs led to an extended period of dependency on outside 'experts' (usually Israeli veterans of Ashkenazi extraction), and increased feelings of helplessness and inferiority; isolation from the mainstream of Israeli life tended to work against absorption into the dominant culture and to perpetuate social and cultural patterns which were dysfunctional in the new society. Geographic isolation from the centers of population led to the development of sub-standard educational institutions and social services in many cases, since few veteran settlers tended to join the new settlements and towns. In the established towns and cities, new immigrants tended to be isolated in separate communities and neighbourhoods; bad planning which did not take into account the needs of large families, jerry-built housing and lack of communal facilities tended to turn new housing developments for immigrants into instant slums. Economic expansion increased the demand for skilled workers who were offered economic incentives, thus leading to increased wage differentials. The immigrant from the African and Asian countries, lacking vocational skills and training, tended to gravitate towards the lower levels of the occupational scale, with its concomitant lower income. Similarly, his lower educational level closed off access to the middle and higher echelons of administration and civil service.

Veteran Israelis and immigrants from the West predominantly controlled the administrative, political and communal institutions of the country.

As the general standard of living improved in the 60's, many of the grosser manifestations of poverty were eliminated. The socio-economic gap, however, not only persisted but expanded. More ominously, economic, social and educational stratification correlated highly with ethnic affiliation. It was commonly assumed that the provision of better housing and services, the accelerated integration of the Eastern immigrant into Western society, and the assimilation of Ashkenazi values and cultural patterns would resolve the problems of inequality and deprivation. The older generation of immigrants tended to be viewed as a lost generation, whose dysfunctional life-style would die off with them, and the hope lay in providing equal opportunities for the younger generation, thereby assuring its integration. The army, and above all the schools, were viewed as the great equalizers. The fact that the positive effects of equal opportunity were largely neutralized by economic, social and cultural disadvantage at the <u>starting point</u> was on the whole overlooked. Lack of occupational skills and education and concomitant low income, as well as large families and overcrowded living conditions, combined to create the classic syndrome of poverty and deprivation and to create a fertile breeding-ground for failure, low achievement, and the perpetuation and expansion of the socio-economic gap.

The frustrations of a generation which had grown up in poverty and disadvantage expressed themselves in inter-communal tensions which once more came to the forefront in the early 70's and drew the attention of the country to what came to be considered Israel's foremost domestic problem: the existance of a sizable deprived population of clearly defined ethnic origins in its midst.

Within the short span of its existance, Israel had achieved remarkable results in terms of improving the general standard of living of its population and assuring it of an adequate level of nutrition, health, housing, education and income.

An enlightened policy of social betterment had led to considerable improvement in the tangible, material conditions of the poor. A wide variety of government measures had been directed towards narrowing the socio-economic gap: family allowances, grants to low-income families, maternity grants, old-age and survivor's pensions, social welfare payments of various sorts, compulsory and free education and special-educational facilities, subsidized housing, etc. However, there was increasing awareness that the provision of social services and economic betterment - the manipulation of the tangible variables of deprivation - could not eliminate disadvantage or prevent its perpetuation, and that in order to disrupt the vicious circle of deprivation, the negative effects of social and cultural disadvantage in the home and in the community on the development of the child must be mitigated. Equal educational opportunity had its obvious limitations; what seems to be called for at first examination was more and better education for the disadvantaged child.

From the mid 50's on, a wide range of compensatory education and enrichment programs were introduced into the Israeli school system. The cumulative results, as revealed by a number of studies carried out in the 70's were on the whole disappointing. Almost without exception, these studies stressed the limited benefits of compensatory educational activities as well as their limited potential success in reversing the impact of social and cultural disadvantage. There was general agreement that the role of the formal educational system in reducing the cultural and educational gap between the advantaged and disadvantaged populations was restricted, and that what was called for was a comprehensive, coordinated intervention program, providing social as well as educational inputs, utilizing both formal and informal settings, and encompassing the child, his family, and the broader community. Only when all the elements constituting the child's world - the family, the school and the community, direct their joint efforts towards the realization of a common goal, could the vicious circle of self-perpetuating disadvantage be disrupted.

The problem of disadvantage:socio-economic, cultural, and educational,was, an and remains,proportionately more severe in the development or new towns. In the light of the history of these towns, this is not surprising.

Most of the towns were established in the 50's in underdeveloped or outlying regions of the country, and settled primarily by new immigrants from Asian-African countries. The majority of new immigrants from Europe and the more mobile sector of the Asian-African settlers tended to leave these towns as soon as they had the opportunity to do so - as did many of the more successful and upwardly mobile of the second generation.

The geographic isolation of these towns from large centers of population, combined with the need to maintain a full complement of municipal services - social, educational, etc. further compounded the problem of distress - skilled local personnel to staff these services were at a premium, and the availability of qualified people from outside the towns willing to work, if not to settle in them, was, and in some cases continues to be, problematic. The problem was particularly severe in the area of education. The high proportion of children per family assured a large 'client population' for the educational institutions, which, for lack of adequately trained personnel and other resources, tended to be inadequately equipped to deal with the multi-dimensional problems of the deprived child. Similarly, there was a lack of trained social workers and community workers to deal with the general problems resulting from cultural and social disadvantage and lack of community organization.

2. <u>The Problem in Particular: Ofakim as a Case in Point</u>

Ofakim, as it revealed itself to us when we began to prepare our preliminary report prior to the actual intervention, was typical of the development towns settled in the 50's.

Founded in 1954, the town in 1967 had a population of 8,500, which by 1976 had grown to 11,500. This growth was the result of the high birth rate, since there was a negative net-balance of new immigrants settling in the town vs. established settlers leaving it. According to a major survey of Ofakim made in 1974, 90% of the population came from Asian-African countries, 75% from North-Africa. The majority of the population had immigrated to Israel between 1956 and 1965. 53% of the population was under 19 years of age (compared to the national average of 39.2%). The average size family was 5.6, compared to 2.9 in the nation as a whole.

In a comparative demographic study of the 24 development towns and distressed city areas included in the Ministry of Education's 'Social Betterment Program' begun in 1975, Ofakim fared rather badly, both in comparison to national averages and also within the sample of the 24 settlements designated for special care.

Employment in Ofakim consisted primarily of textiles and some light manufacturing employing mostly unskilled labor. There was a lack of industrial diversity and skilled jobs were scarce. Many young people were unemployed, unwilling to work for minimal wages on an assembly line with no chance of advancement and the added disadvantage of shift work. Young men who had acquired technical skills in the army found few job opportunities in the town, and the same was true of the girls who had trained in secretarial or clerical work. Many of the more diligent and ambitious left the town.

Ironically, many of the professional and semi-professional white collar jobs were filled by commuters from Beer-Sheva (high-school teachers, social workers, medical staff, etc.).

The state of education in Ofakim was worse than that of the population of immigrants from Afro-Asian countries in general. 400 children entered the school system yearly; of these 400, 78 completed high school in 1975 of whom 30 took matriculation exams, and 15 passed. The schools themselves were on the whole of poor quality and parents who were concerned for their children's future often sent them to boarding schools in other parts of the country, thus further weakening the quality of the schools. Some 37% of the residents of Ofaim lived on welfare.

Ofakim's major problems were economic and demographics- two factors which are on the whole interdependent. These problems were beyond the scope of our intervention, and depended to a large degree on the vicissitudes of governmental policy for their solution. Since most of the inhabitants would, for better of worse, continue to live in Ofakim, the question we were faced with was whether we could help the community to develop structures enabling it to function more effectively, decrease its dependency on outside assistance in the essential spheres of community life, and improve the quality of its members' lives.

We were at first sight struck by the wide range of activities and programs which had been initiated by various institutions and agencies. However, further examination revealed a number of crucial and unresolved structural and functional problems which limited their impact and effectiveness:

1. New developments in the fields of education, social welfare, and community organization had generally been initiated by outside elements. Neither the local directors of programs nor the 'client population' had been called upon to define needs and priorities; no provision had been made for the active involvement of the community and its members in the actual planning and implementation of programs. No attempt had been made to decrease dependency on outside expertise by training local people in the skills the community needs, and the local population was on the whole not regarded as a potential reservoir of talents and skills.

2. The incessant turnover of outside 'experts' defeated all attempts at continuity, and a number of potentially successful initiatives died a premature death as a result of the ubiquitous lack of trained personnel. New projects had been initiated without provisions being made for their effective continuation by local people.

3. No systematic attempt has been made to comprehensively define the problems of the community, to establish clear priorities, and to evolve a coordinated program. Existant programs and activities were sporadic, fragmented, limited in scope and superficial in their impact.

4. Most of the cultural and educational programs intended to enrich the lives of the people of Ofakim had little impact on the large majority of the population, whose opinions and interests were not considered and whose response to them was on the whole apathetic.

5. The lack of comprehensive planning and coordination was most evident in the field of education. The child's activities in school bore little relation to life at home; the school, concerned with improving his academic performance, made little or no effort to engage the interest of participation of the parent in the processes involved.

The parent, for his part, regarded education as the sole responsibility of the school. No links had been developed to bring these two worlds into closer contact with each other and their relationship was often indifferent, if not outright hostile.

3. Perceived Solutions, Goals and Strategies

We hoped that the project would be able to evolve effective answers to some of these lacunae. By developing programs actively involving parents in their children's and their own education, the project aimed to decrease the community's dependence on outside assistance, improve its ability to solve its problems through reliance on its own resources, enhance its self-image and self-esteem and enrich the quality of community life. No less, we hoped that the active participation of parents in the education of their children, as opposed to reliance solely on professional educators, would improve the quality and effectiveness of that education and create an educational ecology more conductive to the child's optimal development and the improvement of his life-chances.

In making these assumptions, the project relied on the cumulative evidence of educational research throughout the world which stressed the crucial role of the parental and home environment in the education of the child and the realization of his potential. We envisioned our role as that of a catalyst for change, and saw our key task as that of identifying and nurturing the development of potential local leadership. This meant involving all the elements active in the community and concerned with its social welfare in the planning and implementation of an integrated program of community development and education. We considered the active participation of members of the community in the process of defining needs, determining priorities, and planning programs as essential to the success of the venture. No less, we regarded the training of local people to run project activities as a key objective in itself, as well as a most effective means to an end, insofar as the indigenous project staff would be able to serve as role models for others in the community, and agents for change.

We faced a dilemma common to externally initiated interventions. Social change, in developmental terms, implies a process of growing awareness and perception of needs and problems, matched by a growing capacity to cope with them. At face value, development and intervention appear to be a contradiction of terms: social change cannot be imposed, nor even proposed, before the community is sufficiently aware of the need for change and motivated to do so. Yet how is such awareness to come about under conditions of apathy and resignation?

Although internally engendered social change is undoubtedly to be preferred, many communities lack the pre-conditions providing the necessary impetus towards change, as well as the skills, experience and self-confidence to assure that such an impetus, if forthcoming, will not be frustrated and aborted early on, perverted by the interference of narrow interest-groups, or coopted by elements self-served by the maintainance of the status-quo. The intervention of an external change-agent is thus both justified and necessary, on the condition that his commitment is to fostering and developing the community's human resources in the service of the community's needs. Intervention of this type is above all an educative process, a 'drawing-out' of the potential for autonomous functioning inherent in all individuals and communities. Within this context, the style of intervention could not be other than supportive and participative: directiveness would be self-defeating, encouraging the continuation of dependency and countervailing growth and development. However, it was as necessary to avoid the 'laissez-faire' approach favoured by some naive do-gooders whose ideological commitment to autonomy and self-management blinds them to the need of individuals and communities for the stimulus of new ideas and concepts as well as for support, guidance and training in order to attain the growth and maturity without which true autonomy and self-management cannot be achieved. The external change-agent, the intervener from outside the community, is first and foremost a facilitator, an enabler - one might say, a midwife. It is his task to help the community to understand and define its own needs, problems, and priorities, to expand its awareness of possible solutions and directions of change.It is up to him to help his clients to acquire the skills, the tools, the self-confidance and the will to effect these solutions and to move in the direction of change.

Community development is an ongoing process of growth and development, a continuous expansion of the parameters of the possible and desirable as needs and priorities are re-defined in the light of new perceptions. The acid-test of a successful community development intervention is the degree to which it succeeds in helping the community to acquire the skills and self-confidence to bridge the gap between the desirable and necessary and the possible, between aspirations and their realization.

The story of the project, as described in part I of this report, is the story of this process of growth and development - growth and development of project activities in the community, matched by growth and development of skills and self-confidence on the part of the project's indigenous staff, the participants in its programs, and the community which increasingly assumed direct responsibility for all aspects of project operations. It is also, in part, my own story, in the role of mid-wife to this process.

IV EPILOGUE

Project Education and Community Development was initiated in 1977 and concluded in December 1983, at which point the municipality of Ofakim assumed full responsibility for its continuation. For Ofakim, the six years in between were years marked both by change and by stagnation. Re-reading the Preliminary Report on Ofakim [1] which I wrote in November 1977, I find that many of the problems identified then remain unresolved. Moreover, in some spheres (such as the economic one) problems have become more acute, while yet in others (such as cultural and community life), there has been some regression. On the other hand, progress is evident in other areas: most of the older neighbourhoods have been spruced-up and renovated; new neighbourhoods have sprung up, containing both apartment blocks and private houses and villas; there are several new banks, and many more private cars on the roads, (however, no new schools, kindergartens, public buildings or public transport in the town) the one cinema has closed down; and with the exception of a few small workshops, no new industrial enterprise has come to the town). Facilities and services for the aged have improved considerably; computers are now used in all the schools, (both high-school and elementary) to teach mathematics.

Almost without exception, change, where it has taken place, has been initiated from outside, by governmental or para-governmental agencies, and has been funded and directed by the same. It is thus not surprising that change, where it has taken place, reflects the priorities and policies of these agencies (whether it also reflects the priorities of the community is a moot point, because on the whole the population of the town was not consulted). No less it reflects the priorities and policies of central government - on whom the town is dependent for more than 90% of its budget. What is immediately evident to even the casual visitor returning to the town six years later is the improved standard of living of the individual, the direct outcome of these priorities. What is less immediately evident is the fact that during these years almost no change has taken place in the infra-structure. Despite the considerable resources invested in Ofakim's development - there has been no real development of the community, no systematic attempt to enhance

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1 Project Integrated Education and Community Development-Ofakim Preliminary Report Nov. 1977.

the town's viability or its capacity to function autonomously. At the beginning of 1984, some 20% of the town's breadwinners were unemployed, and given Israel's deepening economic crisis, this situation will almost inevitably worsen; schools and kindergartens are overcrowded and rapidly deteriorating; on market-day the women of the town still trach long distances on foot with their baskets and shopping bags.

It is depressing to re-read the 1977 Preliminary Report; one feels that time almost stood still. If the responsibility for lack of development of an adequate infra-structure can be squarely placed on the shoulders of central government, the Ofakim Local Council must be held directly responsible for the lack of community development. The 1978 municipal election brought to power the representatives of the National Religious Party and a mayor, Mr. Avraham Revivo, who, despite his populist stance, ran the town like a feudal fiefdom. Not only was community involvement and participation of town residents not encouraged: any autonomous initiative was actively opposed. No provisions were made for training local people to staff the social services and administrative positions which were often filled by outsiders; nor was any attempt made to attract young and educated people to the town. In the 1977 Preliminary Report I indicated a number of hopeful new developments, especially in the area of community life, youth activities, and informal education. These were often a happy combination of local initiative reinforced by volunteer activity of kibbutzim in the region, pensioners, and local groups. Most of these efforts were choked off, either through active opposition or through withdrawal of support. To list some examples:

1. Social Services[2]: social workers continue to come from outside the town; the department is understaffed and continues to suffer from high turnover. To this day Ofakim lacks a trained community worker. As a result, local women trained as para-professional community workers are also not working (the sublime logic of bureaucracy - in this instance, the Ministry of Labor and Welfare - has declared that the latter may only be employed if supervised by a certified community worker).

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2. For situation in 1977: see pp. 19-20 of Preliminary Report on Ofakim/

3. According to a report presented on 3.1.85 to the National Council for Socio - Economic Affairs by a special commission investigating pocket of unemployment, this figure has realised 50%!

2. Community Life and Organization [4]

In the Preliminary Report, under the heading of "Community Life and Organization", I wrote: "Organized community life is a recent development in Ofakim - in essence the joint product of a happy (if sometimes turbulent) marriage between the Community Centre and the volunteers (kibbutz members, Garin Oded, pensioners) who both began their activities in this field some four year ago. The Ofakim Community Centre fulfills two major functions - it is itself the base for a wide range of activities which take place in the Centre, and the "nerve centre" of community organization and activities at the neighbourhood level. The Centre coordinates the community activities of the Department of Welfare, Amigour, the municipality and the volunteers, and representatives of these groups determine the direction and nature of community work at the neighbourhood level". Within months of Mr. Revivo's election, the coordinating body had ceased functioning, the director of the Community Centre had been replaced by a political appointee (who was in turn replaced when he proved to be of too independent a turn of mind); many of the social and cultural activities aimed at the younger and better educated population were discontinued; volunteers from outside the community were given to understand that they were not welcome, and neighbourhood-based community activities, deprived of support, ground to a standstill. The Community Centre's activities became centralized and acquired a distinct parochial cast, in all senses of the word. After the 1983 municipal elections, which returned Mr. Yechiel Ben-Tov to the post of mayor, the incumbent Community Centre's director was relieved of his post - which still remains open. Whoever will eventually fill the position will have to pick up the pieces and begin afresh.[5].

3. Health Services

For several years, the Association for the Advancement of Health and Social Welfare in the Negev (a joint effort of Kupat Holim, (the Health Fund of the Histadrut,) the Ministry of Health, and the Medical School of Ben-Gurion University, supported by the J.D.C.) was engaged in developing a community health programme in Ofakim.

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4. For situation in 1977: see pp. 44-47 of Preliminary Report Ofakim.

5. This process has indeed begun. In Dec. 1984 a new director was finally appointed! One of his first initiatives was to coordinate activities with the Community Education Project + its present director Mrs. Beryl Yahav.

One of its more successful efforts was the integration of pediatric services (Kupat Holim is usually responsible for curative, the Ministry of Health for preventive care). In 1983, the integrated clinics were disbanded, and the situation reverted to status quo ante, to the distress of the client population. The politicians of the town could not have cared less.

4. Youth

In 1977, the Ofakim Youth Centre provided a fairly broad range of activities for teenagers; though troubled by a lack of local counsellors, the presence of volunteers served as a partial solution. A number of youth movements were active in the town, as well as the local "Youth to Youth" organization which ran a "big brother" program. Under Mr. Revivo's administration, most of these activities came to an end, partly as a result of benign neglect and partly as a result of deliberate policy - especially those activities of a universal nature and secular character.

This list of regression and failure is partial, but sufficient to indicate the climate and tone of community life in Ofakim during the years of Mr. Revivo's incumbency - years which coincide with most of the life-span of the Project. Against this background, the project and its achievements in the area of early childhood education and community development shines like a bright ray of light and hope. Not once, sheer survival was of major concern, and seemed almost miraculous in face of the odds. But in the real world these are no miracles, and the project survived and flourished because there were enough people in Ofakim who cared and fought for its survival - and no less, because of outside support, of the Bernard van Leer Foundation, the United Kibbutz Movement, and others -- support which provided the project with the degrees of freedom essential for its development no less than for its survival. In a sense, success in an endeavor of this nature is an equation of constraints and obstacles on one hand, and clear cut objectives, flexible strategies, and degree of freedom on the other. The unquantifiable factor which in no small measure determines success is a stubborn belief in what one is doing, and the determination to overcome irrational, man - made obstacles.

Shortly before the termination of the project, Mr. Yechial Ben-Tov, our original partner in the initiation of the project, was returned to office. Through his concerted efforts, the smooth "phasing out" of the project and assumption of responsibility for its continuity by the Local Council were assured.

As for Ofakim, we can only hope that the Project will serve as a paradigm for development in other areas of community life. That the potential for meaningful social change exists in the community has been adequately shown by the Project.

Ruth Paz

January 1985.

APPENDIX I

A B S T R A C T

Summative Evaluation Report on Project Education and Community Development - Ofakim

The summative evaluation of the six years of project activity carried out by Project Education and Community Development in Ofakim serves two major goals:

1. Summation of the evaluation findings over the six year period;
2. Evaluation of the evaluation.

The purpose of this summation is two-fold: on the one hand, to present the picture of the activities of a complex community project, its successes, failures and problems it encountered, and on the other hand, that of the evaluation and its successes, failures and the problems encountered by it.

Underlying the two goals set forth above is the expectation that combined with what can be learnt from the history of the project itself, they will significantly further our knowledge and understanding of how to evaluate a project of this kind. The summative evaluation will comprise three sections:

1. Summative evaluation of each of the various project programs, their planning, implementation, and effect.
2. Evaluation of the project as a totality: its theoretical assumption, methods of operation, relations with the township, etc., throughout three stages:
   a. planning and initial entry into the town;
   b. implementation and project activity;
   c. phasing-out.
3. Examination of the impact of the project on the town. What changes, direct or indirect were effected by the project and its activities? What was created in the town as an outcome of six years of project activity?

Parallel to this examination, the summative evaluation will look at the evaluation itself. How was the evaluation plan designed, what alternatives were available, and why were specific methodologies and instruments chosen, rather than others? What constraints confronted the evaluation? What was the evaluation able to assess and what not? Evaluation of the evaluation will be integrated into each of the three sections described above, so that, as each topic is touched upon, we will discuss how it was evaluated and why.

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LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

Progress Reports and Work-Plans

1. Project Proposal and Work-Plan for Year I - September 1977
2. Preliminary Report on Ofakim - November 1977 — 50 pp.
3. Progress Report No. 1.: October 1977 - March 1978 — 31 pp.
4. Progress Report No. 2. : Summary of Project Activities - Year I - October 1977 - August 1978 — 26 pp.
5. Work-Plan and Objectives for the Second Year of Project Operations : September 1978 - Autust 1979 — 47 pp.
6. Progress Report No. 3.: September 1978 - February 1979 — 17 pp.
7. Progress Report No. 4.: Summary of Project Activities Year II - September 1978 - August 1979 — 66 pp.
8. Work-Plan and Objectives for the Third Year of Project Operations: September 1979 - August 1980 — 46 pp.
9. Summary Report - Stage I: September 1977 - August 1980 — 163 pp.
10. Work-Plan and Objectives : Phase II - Year I 1981 — 15 pp.
11. Work-Plan and Objectives : Phase II - Year II 1982 — 24 pp.
12. Progress Report No. 5. : Summary of Project Activities 1980 - 1982 — 107 pp.
13. Work-Plan and Objectives - Phase II : September 1982 - August 1983 — 13 pp.
14. Work-Plan for Final Stage of Project Operations: September - December 1983 — 19 pp.

Evaluation Reports (Prepared by the Unit for Project Evaluation - Hubert Humphrey Center for Social Ecology - Ben-Gurion University of the Negev)

1. Evaluation Report for the Period January - June 1981 - Miri Levin - Rozalis (English and Hebrew) — 96 pp.
2. Evaluation Report for the Period September 1981 - July 1982 - Miri Levin - Rozalis (English and Hebrew) — 106 pp.
3. Evaluation Report for the period September 1982 - July 1983 - Miri Levin - Rozalis (English and Hebrew) — 78 pp.

Booklets

1. *The Community Education Project - Ofakim 1979-1980 (Hebrew)* — *23 pp.*
2. *The Community Education Project - Ofakim 1980-1981 (Hebrew)* — *27 pp.*
3. *Project Education and Community Development Ofakim 1980 - 1981 (English)* — *45 pp.*
4. *Step by Step and Side by Side - an Activity Guide for Parents and Children in their First Three Years - edited by Lila Namir (Hebrew) 1982* — *103 pp.*

Films

"New Horizons" - Project Education and Community - Ofakim 1983 (English, Hebrew and Spanish) 35 mm and video — *26 minutes*